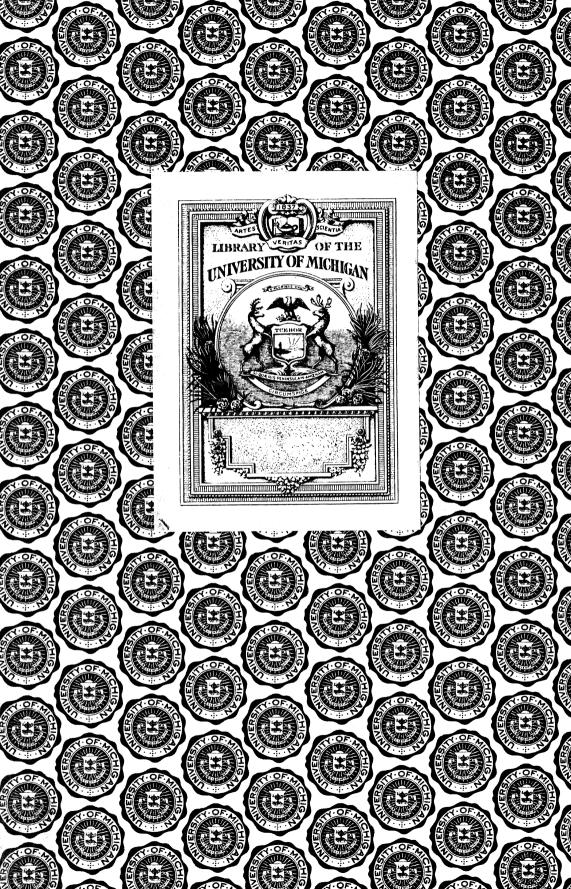
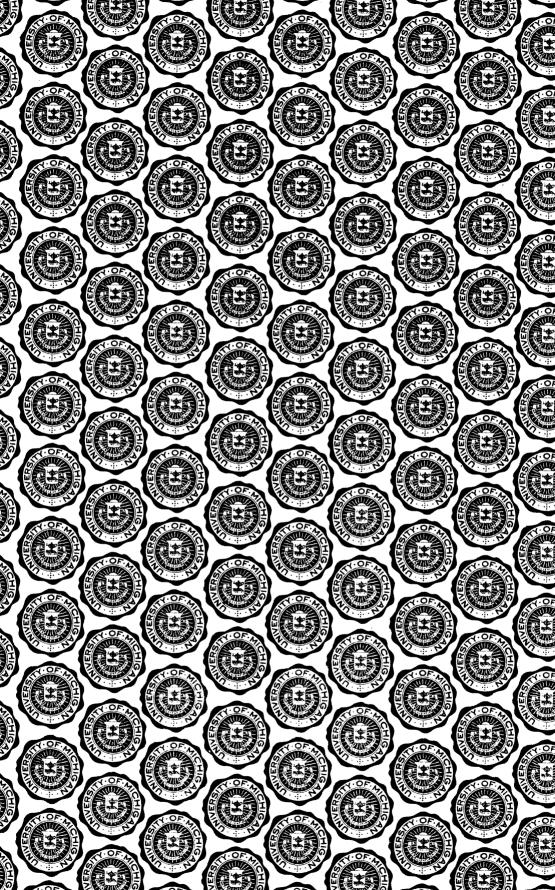


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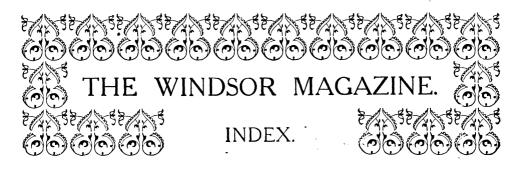
# THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE

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FOR MEN AND WOMEN

VOL. LXVII DECEMBER, 1927, TO MAY, 1928

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General Japon



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MADAME ANNA PAVLOVA IN HER BALLET, "DON QUIXOTE."

[See article by the famous dancer on page 14.]

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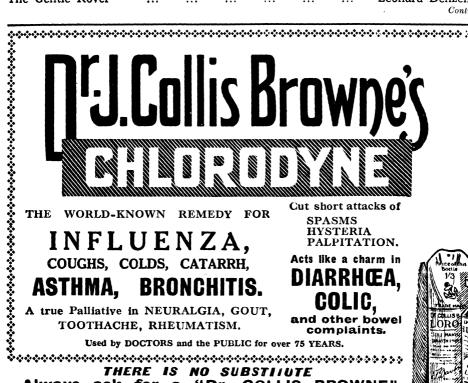
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## THE DATCHLEY INHERITANCE

### INVITATION TO ADVENTURE

#### By STEPHEN McKENNA

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

F fifty readers who learned last spring that John Datchley, of Datchley Castle, was dead, hardly five can have realized that one of the strangest chapters in the history of succession was opening under their eyes. When the idle had computed my old client's millions and the curious had enquired who would inherit the estates in which he had lain hidden for a lifetime, the unloved, unlovely and unloving miser was forgotten until the day when his will was published.

I was bound that morning for my office in Lincoln's Inn Fields when my neighbour in the train observed to a friend:

"Nearly four and a half million, I see."

"Everything goes—quite unromantically—to a grandson," supplemented the other.
"He's a fortunate young man!"
"A pleasant windfall for the Exchequer,"

said the first.

And they were discussing Budget prospects when I left the train at the British Museum

That, I surmised, was how most people would receive the news, not pausing to reflect that crimes might have been committed, lives ruined or hearts broken before the questionably fortunate grandson could enter upon his kingdom. On the mild spring

night that I journeyed to Inverness with the will which John Datchley had executed when the last of his three daughters married without his consent, I myself did not pause to reflect that, before the year was out, I might be amusing myself by writing the "unromantic" history of the Datchley inheritance. When my client disinherited his children and disowned his grandchildren, I had ceased to feel any human interest in him.

The telegram that summoned me was so urgent that I scarcely expected to find the old man alive, but I was assured by the grim factor that "Old Mortality" was not only conscious but as wilful and malignant as in his prime.

"He's troubled in his mind, though, about this place, Mr. Plimsoll," whispered old Ferguson, as we came to the top of the peeltower. "The name dies with him; and, unless he makes his peace with the family,

there's no one to follow him."

"Is he in the mood for peace?" I asked, but the factor would only fling open the door as though he preferred me to judge for myself.

I sat down as far from the bed as I dared. Old Datchley's head was now almost hairless; and his dry skin hung in folds on neck and wrists. With his high-bridged nose and piercing grey eyes, he reminded me of a dying vulture; though he could scarcely speak, I should hardly have been surprised if his twisted talons or yellow teeth had suddenly buried themselves in my flesh.

"I've been looking into my affairs," he panted. "I require you to give me certain information. Those gals? Did they have

any children?"

To the end, I then realized, the old man meant to keep up his amiable pretence that his daughters were dead; and I had to instruct him in the history of his own family, as though he had slept like Rip van Winkle for the past fifty years. wife, I reminded him formally (and he received the information as though it were news), had died after bearing him three daughters ("But no sons," Datchley muttered). The daughters, I continued, had married ("Without my consent"), respec-tively, a William Gauntlett, of the Indian army, now retired with rank of lieutenantcolonel, a Mark Abbotsford, artist and dilettante ("Is he still alive?," Datchley interrupted in a purr that shewed he knew of his son-in-law's death as well as I did), and a Clement Fairfax, civil servant.

"Mrs. Gauntlett," I went on in the manner of a genealogist, "had issue: three sons and two daughters . . ."

"You can omit the daughters," whispered Datchley. "My eldest grandson . . . ? I'm thinking who would expect to succeed me

Women, I was to understand, existed in the old man's scheme as mothers of sons; and sons were vehicles for carrying on the

name and continuing the family.

I told him of the Gauntlett boys ("Unmarried? Go on!"), of Peter and Hilary Fairfax and of Jane Abbotsford's brood of four. The old man's fingers moved and moved again, as he reckoned up his nine grandsons. "Waiting for me to die," he muttered and for the second time asked whether none was married.

"They can't afford it," I explained. boys had got their schooling how they could; later, when an opening offered, they were crammed into it regardless of future prospects and present tastes. "Your daughters all married poor men . . ."
"Their own choice!," Datchley snarled

in a tone that warned me not to intercede for them. "Do any of these boys think of marrying?," he asked after a pause.

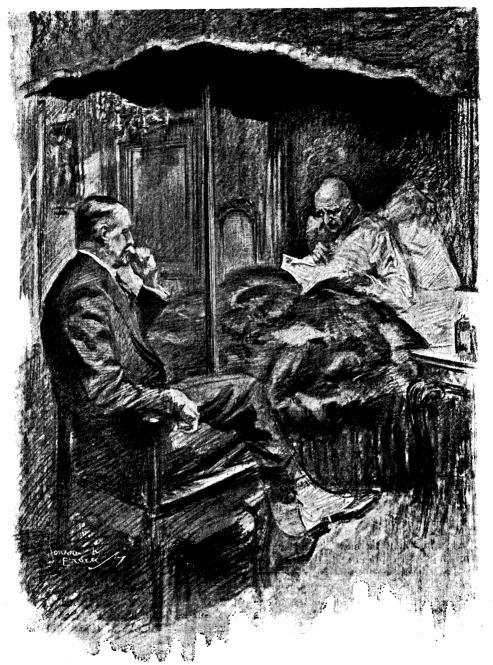
"That's hard for me to say," I temporized till I should know his mind. Bryan Abbotsford alone had spoken to me of an engagement; but, as the mother of his intended wife had scotched the romance by making her daughter a ward of court, the engagement could not ripen to marriage until Miss Brenda Halliday came of age. "I have seen nothing of the Gauntletts for several years . . ."

The old man brooded for a while in silence,

then called for his will.

"I sent for you because George is dead," he explained. "Died the first of the month."

To this distant cousin, whom I believe he had never met, the old man had left everything in the far-off days when he altered his will for the last time. He had defended himself then by saying that George, though a weakling, was still a Datchley and at least better able to carry on the family name than these women who could not even take the trouble to be men; but I chose to think that he cared little where the money went so long as it never reached his rebellious daughters' children. And, when he mumbled of the eldest grandson who would "expect" to succeed him, I was prepared to find him planning a



"I sat down as far from the bed as I dared. . . . With his high-bridged nose and piercing grey eyes, he reminded me of a dying vulture."

surprise to shew that the expectations of grandsons who waited for him to die were

liable to be disappointed.
"No good keeping this now?," the old man asked, fingering the stiff parchment tremulously.

"Until you make a new will," I had to

point out, "your daughters are your heirsat-law and will inherit equally."

The aged yellow face was contorted to a grin.

"I thought as much," he whispered.
"Will you cast your eye over that and tell
me if it's in order? Can't take risks, you

know. Smart lad in the village. Son of my factor. Training for an attorney himself."

From a hiding-place in the tumbled bedclothes, Datchley pulled with nerveless fingers at a foolscap envelope. It contained, I found, a will in two clauses, dated and signed by him on the day of his cousin's death; and, considering the sums involved, I thought that the "smart lad" was perhaps dangerously concise. The estate was being divided among a number of wholly deserving charities; and, for fear his children and grandchildren might think he had passed them over inadvertently, he left each of them ten pounds to buy a mourning-ring.

"That all right?," he asked. "You can

go now."

#### II.

As he did not say whether he wanted to see me again, I went to my room and employed my leisure in writing my diary.

"Though he is on the shady side of eighty," I recorded, "my client seems to have discovered for the first time that he cannot carry his possessions into the next world. And the discovery has made him wretched. Instead, however, of trying to do good on his death-bed, he seems to be plotting a final attack on people who—in a sense—defeat him by surviving when he is gone."

I need hardly say that Datchley was too cunning, if this indeed was his purpose, to avow it; and, when he sent for me next day, it was to invite my opinion of a further document prepared by the "smart lad in the village."

"A codicil, don't you call it?," the old

man wheezed.

The draft which he now pushed at me was an altogether more uncertain instrument than the two-clause will of the day before. Its many blanks made difficult reading; and, while I grasped that Datchley was—for his own purposes—relenting towards his grandsons, I realized that he had forgotten the names which I had so laboriously repeated overnight.

"Well ?," he challenged me.

"If any of these boys marry within a year of your death, the original will is to be overridden?," I asked. "'That one who being married within twelve calendar months and taking the surname of Datchley...' What do you mean to happen if more than one of them marries?"

"First come, first served," answered the old man indifferently. "Is that in order?"

Before answering, I had to consider how much unsolicited advice he would tolerate and how much equity I could persuade him to blend with law.

"Several of these boys might have been married by now if they'd had the means," I said. "If you gave each one a legacy . . . Better still, if you provided for them substantially in your lifetime . . ."

The old man stopped me to ask what I meant by a substantial provision. Five thousand pounds? I could arrange for each of them to have that forthwith.

"My only other suggestion," I continued, "if you want your name and line to be preserved at all costs, is that you should strike out the time-limit."

Datchley considered for a moment; then his lower lip shot obstinately forward.

"Make it twelve months from the execution of the will," he ordered. "I'm not going to die yet awhile; and in twelve months I can see if they're in earnest. They'll find plenty o' gals when they know what they have to offer. That's legal, ain't it? Courts won't upset that?"

"I think it's impolitic," I said. "To tell any man that there are several millions waiting for him if he'll marry a wife of any kind within a stated time."

kind within a stated time . . ."

"That's their look-out," said old Datchley.

"Have you pictured the consequences of such a will?," I asked.

A movement too faint to be called a shrug testified to his indifference; and, emboldened by my former success, I committed the folly of describing what he had perhaps not foreseen for himself. Riches greater than any one could picture were to be dangled before a number of young men who had unwittingly been brought up to the belief that want of money was the root of all evil. Their childhood of sparing meals and passed-on clothes, their youth of poor schools and joyless holidays, their manhood of routine and subjection flowed all from a single cause; and—for one of them—this was to be ended by an act as arbitrary as the drawing of a name from a hat. Of nine men who got up as beggars one would go to bed a millionaire; and fortune's favourite, if indeed this were fortune, might well be the man who offered five pounds for a wife at the door of a labour-exchange.

So I argued for an hour, to find at the end that Datchley was asleep. He woke refreshed and enquired whether I would settle the codicil or leave it to the "smart lad".

"You say it's through me that they're

still unmarried . . . ," he panted. "Make it plain that I am applying no compulsion. If they're young men of spirit . . . Opportunity . . . Chance of adventure . . . I'm only issuing an invitation . . ."

Two days later I returned to London.

"Twelve months from to-day!," were Datchley's last words. "They need not be afraid that I shall change my mind or make another will . . ."

Had he wished to break his promise, there was, indeed, hardly time. Within a week of my leaving him, my oldest client was dead.

The news reached me with the first suspicious letters from grandsons who—almost without exception—asked me what conditions were attached to "Gaffer" Datchley's belated liberality.

"Then what's the catch?," young Bryan Abbotsford demanded, after I had satisfied him that his five thousand pounds would

be his absolutely.

"There's none," I answered, "but I hope you'll impose a condition on yourself and not touch your capital. At six per cent. you'll have three hundred a year, less tax, for the rest of your life. It's eight to one against your ever getting another penny; and, from my knowledge of you, you'll never make one."

Drifting to a window overlooking Lincoln's Inn Fields, Bryan studied the passers-by, according to each a rung on the legal ladder and putting in his mouth a phrase character-

istic of his standing:

"Barrister's clerk. 'We're in the 'ouse o' Lords to-morrer. No go, 'm fraid.' Chancery leader. 'In the case of Smeeth vairsus Raabinson, m'lord . . .' Old Bailey junior . . . I say, who's the master-cutler in white weskit and monocle?"

"That is a distinguished architect of whom I am sure you have never heard," I answered. "His name is George Simnel and he is responsible for the Home Counties Bank in Piccadilly. Incidentally, he is not in the least like a master-cutler. We were talking about your grandfather's dispositions..."

"What happens to the rest of the

money?," asked Bryan.

"That I shall explain when I can collect you all together. It is open to one of you-only one—to inherit the entire residue on certain conditions."

"There'll be a catch about that," Bryan prophesied. "Tell me, is it possible to marry on three hundred a year?"

"If you mean to work. The greater part of mankind marries on less."

Bryan regarded me with a slight frown, as though he wanted to ask my advice.

"You know, I could work all right," he asserted, "if I got into the proper surroundings."

"Three hundred a year will open the entire

world to you," I answered.

"Less tax? Come, that's promising! D'you know anything about fruit-farming in British Columbia? I adore fruit; and if Brenda and I lived on what we grew..."

"Have you put this proposal before Mrs.

Halliday ?," I interrupted.

Bryan pushed his fingers impatiently through his fair, rather long hair and turned

with an air of sudden resolution.

"That's what I want to talk about," he told me. "She's abroad, as it happens; and, like you, she doesn't believe I shall ever make money, but if I can shew her a perfectly good cheque for five thousand . . . I mean, it makes a difference, doesn't it?"

"It's something to fall back on while you're trying your luck with the fruit-farm. How long is Brenda prepared to wait?"

"Well, she comes of age in September."
But, unless Mrs. Halliday makes a settlement on her, she'll be no better off

than she is now."

"She won't be a ward in chancery," Bryan replied significantly. "I've been wondering . . ." He eyed me in obvious uncertainty of my discretion. "The Court can't unstick us once we're married."

"To marry a ward in chancery without leave is contempt of Court. The Court can, and certainly will, send you to prison until

you have purged your contempt."

"If we get married secretly, the Court won't hear anything about it," Bryan retorted. "When she's of age, we could get married again; but, if we slip out to British Columbia before that, you don't tell me the Court will hike me back to purge my contempt? Not likely!"

I had to leave him unanswered. As a lawyer and a law-abiding citizen, I could not advise him to flout the authority of the law. As Datchley's solicitor, with equal responsibilities to the other potential beneficiaries, I could not tell him that, if he would wait until the terms of the will were known, Mrs. Halliday would probably be the first to bless his marriage with her daughter.

"You will no doubt do what you think best," I was beginning, when a messenger

came in with a telegram.

#### III.

IT was from Ferguson, the factor at Datchley, to inform me that the old man had died the day before.

I returned to Scotland that night; and my first act as trustee was to invite George Simnel to examine the house and to report what should be done to keep it in tenantable repair. Then I requested the "smart lad" who had drawn Datchley's new will to inform me whether our client had said anything to throw light on a codicil which at each new reading seemed more and more the handiwork of a lunatic or a criminal.

"You don't suggest it can be challenged?," enquired young Ferguson with a

touch of professional anxiety.

"I wish it could be," I answered. Datchley puts me in mind of a man who has kept people on the verge of starvation and suddenly orders them to eat their fill, scrambling for the purpose a pan of redhot sovereigns. If he was sane enough to understand my warnings and obstinate enough to disregard them, he was also malevolent enough to make dispositions calculated to bring the greatest amount of unhappiness to the largest number of people, thereby avenging himself unto the second and third generation. You are surely not taken in by his sanctimonious talk about 'the family ' and ' the family name', when he has given half his lifetime to persecuting the family and making the family name stink? As for his successor in the family-seat," I continued, "you cannot think he wanted a rival?" Encased in a glass coffin, Datchley's remains were lying at this moment in his old room at the top of the peel-tower. "He is his own successor. His dead body dominates this place; his wishes are still the only law here. If in his coffin and his grave-clothes he can hold his family at bay, he would be almost consoled for dying. The fancy of a sick brain, you think? It was his brain, my friend, that was sick; and I call him a madman to avoid calling him a miscreant."

I remained in Scotland till my business was done and returned to London for the meeting which I had arranged with the grandsons. I remember thinking then that these young men were already putting out their claws, in the moment that I shook hands with each, to discover before their neighbours what, precisely, I meant by the announcement that the residue of the estate was to go on certain "conditions" to one—and only one

—of them. Was this the condition of being the eldest?, asked Peter Fairfax; or the eldest son of the eldest daughter?, demanded Arthur Gauntlett. Had they to embrace a specified religion?, enquired Hilary. Or forswear alcohol and tobacco?, chorused several.

"It is easier than any of these," I answered, "in some ways. And in others it is more difficult. Are we all here?"

In my professional career I have had to expound many wills, not infrequently to a larger audience than now. Always, however, there was a widow or an eldest son to act as unofficial foreman; and the gist of the will was commonly known beforehand. For what it may be worth, too, there was always an atmosphere of restrained grief, of goodwill towards one another and of respect for the dead. The manner of my present company was tentatively piratical: all were on tip-toe to get what they could; and no one would commit himself by taking the lead.

"All here?," I repeated.

"Bryan seems to be missing," some one volunteered.

"We'll allow him five minutes," I said.

"As a matter for form, I want you to give me certain particulars of yourselves. Full Christian names. Occupations. Ages. And whether married or single. Hilary?"

An emaciated youth in acid-stained clothes with bulging pockets jerked himself upright and fumbled among a pile of papers in front of him.

"Scientific investigator," he answered.

"Age, twenty-seven."

"You're still working at the Biological Institute?," I asked. Hilary had been intended, I knew, for a doctor, but had never risen higher than the post of demonstrator in a laboratory. When he glorified his bottle-washing with the name of research, I felt he would like me to think that he had sacrificed the emoluments of private practice in order to tread the path of Wallace and Darwin. "What's your line?"

"Merely the improvement of our national physique," Hilary drawled with ironical indifference. "When we breed human beings at least as scientifically as we breed horses and cattle . . ."

As he hunted through his papers, I knew that in another moment I should be presented with some wretched chart of infantile mortality or adult feeble-mindedness.

"Are you married?," I enquired hastily.

The state of my health, I am sorry to

say . . . ," Hilary began soberly; and I wrote down "Unmarried".

I am not, of course, a scientific investigator, but I remembered that Hilary had been prevented by a weak heart from participating in compulsory games at school and that an affection of the spine, which only a layman could have called lack of backbone, kept him from joining an officers' training corps. Peter Fairfax always declared that his young brother blossomed out as a man under sentence at the moment when he had entangled himself with a predatory but eugenic fellow-student.

"And I suppose you're not thinking of getting married?," I said.

"If you had read my little Survival of the

Unfittest . . . ," sighed Hilary.

I turned to the eldest Abbotsford boy, who had been studying Hilary's face like an inquisitor for hints of the answers that were likely to please me.

"Martin ?," I said.

"Schoolmaster. Thirty-one. Unmarried," he replied.

"Have you ever thought of marrying ?,"

"I was engaged once," he replied and looked at me with parted lips to see if he had thrown away his chance.

"Is anything coming of it?," I asked. "This five thousand has rather brightened your prospects. Indeed, that was your grandfather's intention."

So the condition, I felt these young men were saying, was not a vow of celibacy!

"She married another fellow," answered Martin.

"No one else on the horizon?"

"Oh, I'm through with women!"

I returned to my list and had reached the last name when the door opened to admit Bryan, apologetic and flustered. Summarizing what I had already said and receiving the usual answer to my usual question, I explained that, while my client's will had left everything to charity, he had executed a codicil in which—if his intentions were to be taken at face-value—he aimed at preserving the family name and continuing the life of the family.

"The first of his terms," I went on, "is that his heir shall take the name of Datchley and shall live at the castle for six months in each year. The codicil—which, by the way, I opposed with every argument I could muster—was executed three days before his death, when he appointed as his heir that one of you who should be the first to marry within the twelve calendar months following."

#### IV.

FIVE minutes, I should think, must have Then some passed before any one spoke. one whom I could not distinguish, sighing with relief, as though he had expected that they were all to lose a hand or eye before being allowed to enter for the prize, murmured:

"Well, the conditions are clear enough. Why did you advise the old man against

it ? "

I examined the faces on either side of the table before answering. As yet these young men were refusing to look beyond the innocently expressed intention of the codicil.

"On principle," I replied, "I object to any bequest in restraint of personal freedom. A will that enriches you on condition that you marry is no less tyrannical than the will that enriches you on condition that you never marry. Within limits, however, a man may do what he likes with his own."

"To me it seems frankly iniquitous!" I discovered Hilary leaning across the table with a clenched fist outstretched. By any one else a case might at that moment have been made out for the marriage of the unfit, but Hilary's facile pen had paralysed his "This money that might save lives or endow research or relieve suffering is offered as a bribe . . ."

"Come!," I interrupted. "If you don't like the terms, you can leave the thing alone. As I presume you will."

Hilary's answer was a glare that seemed to charge me with complicity in his grandfather's wickedness.

"If we're none of us married within a year, the money goes to charity?," asked "Well, I'm not a marrying man, but I should suggest that, if no one has taken the plunge in six or eight months' time, we'd better meet and draw lots. Nothing illegal in that, is there, Mr. Plimsoll?"

"Failing a more spontaneous solution," I replied, "that would probably be wholly in keeping with the testator's wishes. You realize that the lot might fall on you?"

Martin grimaced and fell silent. Outside, a clock chimed a quarter; and Peter Fairfax drew himself slowly to his feet.

"Are the stakes divided in the event of a dead heat?," he asked impassively.

This, I am convinced, was the first moment that the vision of a contest, merciless and perhaps unscrupulous, against time and

against one another, fell upon the imagination of these young men; and, though the movement may have been fortuitous, I observed four pairs of eyes looking at four watches.

"I've already warned you," I said, "that you'll find yourself in prison if you marry a "I hardly expect that will arise," I said. ward in chancery without obtaining the "Is there anything illegal in a pooling permission of the Court beforehand. I should arrangement ?," interposed

"You feel it's a certainty for you,

"Oh, neck or nothing!," he laughed.

Bryan ?," asked Luke.

Luke Abbotsford. "Can't we agree among ourselves that whoever wins shall take

half the money and that the other half shall be divided equally among others?"

"I would willingly support that," Hilary

broke in eagerly.

"I wouldn't," said Bryan, finding his tongue for the first time since his late and flustered arrival.

The others looked at him suspiciously.

like to warn you all against taking any step without first considering the consequences. Some of you, perhaps, would like to be married in any event; and the threat of inheriting vast wealth as a consequence will not deter you. I can only say, with Pantagruel, 'Wedlock it then'. Do not, however, 'wedlock it' in competition, against the clock. All your lives your grandfather punished you for the disobedience of your parents. I may be doing him an injustice, but I believe this will was his last fling at you. He is dead; but his power for evil lives on. The disobedience of his daughters might have been forgiven, if their runaway marriages had not also been happy mar-

would marry him! After that, nothing mattered. With a heavy heart I opened my office-diary at the page reserved for "memoranda". I set down the date on which John Datchley had executed his will. I noted the day on which his twelve months' grace would expire.



riages. He might have been reconciled to you, if you had not presented an unbroken front to him. Intentionally or no, this codicil is likely to break that front. . . . Now I will not keep you longer."

As the young men raced unceremoniously from the room, I telephoned to remind George Simnel that I was returning to Scotland that night and to suggest that we should dine together first. Through the window giving on Lincoln's Inn Fields, I could see my young friends scattering. Four and a half millions were to be won! Each must at all costs find a woman who

"I was sorry I couldn't dine," he told me, "but I was working up to the last moment. An odd thing happened to me yesterday morning; and my time-table was thrown out of gear."

"You would have found me a depressing companion," I answered. "I'd been working on the Datchley estate all the afternoon; and it had made me rather out of love with human nature."

"As bad as that ?," Simnel laughed.

I had told him before of Datchley's will. I now described the conference in my office and the dispersal of these young men, helterskelter, in search of women who had passed out of their lives, women who had never come into them; women possible or probable who could be brought to a like intoxication by insistent repetition of "four million pounds". . . four million pounds".

"You mean they're scouring London at

this moment . . . ?," asked Simnel.

"In eight or nine different directions. You've heard stories of gold-rushes, stories of looting: it's the same spirit. When I get back to London, I expect to find a small queue lined up by my door. Barmaids, chorus-girls, any female of the species who'll go through a form of marriage . . . "

"And, when all's said and done, only one can win. Your worthy client is breaking a great many eggs to make one very small

omelette."

"The making of the omelette," I said, "was of less importance to him than the breaking of the eggs. However . . . You've finished your report on the castle?"

#### $\mathbf{V}$ .

SIMNEL passed me a bulky packet of plans

and specifications.

"I wrote the last words in bed as the train started. It ought to have been in your hands yesterday, but an unexpected adventure . . . First time such a thing has happened to me in all my life," he chuckled. "I was walking to my office when a man asked if he might speak to me for a moment. He was being married, it seemed, and he'd clean forgotten to get any one as a witness. 'I've a full day's work ahead of me,' I said, 'and any Tom, Dick or Harry would serve your purpose as well.' My young friend shook his head: 'If the validity of the marriage were ever called in question,' he answered, 'I shouldn't have the same confidence in Tom, Dick or Harry as in Mr. George Simnel.'"

"No! Merely an admirer of my Home Counties building in Piccadilly. Well, we all have our little vanities! I said I'd see him through if he'd give me time to call at my office first. I was back in less than forty minutes, being introduced to the bride and feeling that, hang it all, I was a bit old to be engaging in pranks of this kind. I felt sure it was a runaway match."

George Simnel paused to laugh softly to

himself

"The ceremony was hurried through," he continued, "and an hour later I was sitting down to a champagne luncheon at the

Gloucester. I asked this boy why he was afraid the marriage might be invalid; and he told me that his wife was still a minor. 'Even so,' I said, 'the marriage is legal and binding. You can publish it in *The Times* and snap your fingers at the world.' I saw the young people smiling rather unhappily at each other. 'We shan't do that for the moment,' says the boy. 'In fact, we're keeping it a secret till we can get abroad.'"

Involuntarily I jerked myself upright in my corner of old Datchley's tumble-down car. I begged my companion to go on and wondered, if my suspicions were well-founded, how Mr. George Simnel, A.R.I.B.A., would like being described as a master-cutler.

"It seems that these children had been in love for years," he continued, "but they had nothing to marry on till the boy came into an unexpected legacy. On the strength of this they decided that they would bolt to the Colonies. The girl's people were fortunately away, so they seized their chance; and now, unless any one stops them by force, they'll slip away by the first boat."

"When you say 'by force' . . . ?," I

asked.

"Well, our young friend admitted, as he grew mellow, that the girl was a ward in chancery."

My attention at this point wandered for a moment from Simnel's narrative. At last I understood why young Bryan had arrived late, why he was so much excited and why he refused so firmly to consider his brother's pooling-scheme. My companion, obviously quoting the new bridegroom, was saying that it was to no one's interest, except from spite, to attack the fait accompli, as he called it; and I saw little purpose in hinting that there might be an unabashed exhibition of spite when the unsuccessful competitors discovered that Bryan had been lying to them. In imagination I saw again that parade of triumphant bridegrooms and startled brides in the waiting-room of my office.

Bryan, meanwhile, would only break silence to utter a new lie until Brenda was of age. If he tried to warn the others that they were too late, he ran the risk of an exposure that would quite certainly land him in gaol.

"I suppose you are pledged not to disclose the names?," I asked Simnel.

"Well, nothing was actually said . . ."

"I would rather not know them at the present time. If he is the man I think, the knowledge would embarrass me."

"You know the fellow?," George cried

"I have my suspicions. Within a few minutes of leaving you, I fancy he presented himself at my office. Curiously enough, I had occasion to ask him if he was married. He looked me in the eyes and assured me that he was not. I must remind him of that when next we meet."

"If I'm not much mistaken, you'll hear of him next in the far west of Canada."

"If I'm not much mistaken, he won't set foot outside this country for many a long day. Unless we are thinking of different people, that young man has qualified to be John Datchley's heir."

George Simnel stared at me in silence; and, apart from an occasional "Well . . . I'm . . . blest!," he remained silent until the car had wheezed and rattled through the desolate beauty of Datchley Forest to the spit of land between river and sea where the castle reared itself as though it were defying the rollers of the Atlantic and flinging a challenge to the North Pole.

We were met at the door by Ferguson, the dour factor, who informed me in his time-honoured phrase that "Old Mortality" was awaiting me in his room. I was in two minds whether to hint that such a phrase lacked fitting respect to the dead; but, as I looked at Ferguson's grim face, I realized that he was considering not so much that a formula might or might not be disrespectful as that the man to whom it was applied might not deserve the honour paid to death. Save that there were no servants in the house, nothing seemed to have changed since I was last there. When I entered the familiar shadowy room and parted the curtains of the four-poster, I was to find that the glass coffin had been lowered into the frame of the bed. "Old Mortality" seemed very much in possession; he seemed to be waiting; and so strong was my sense of his presence that I caught myself explaining to Ferguson and Simnel, as though I were making my report to the old man, that I had summoned the grandsons and expounded the will.

We did not linger unduly in that grisly chamber of death; and, as we locked the door of the mausoleum, Simnel asked apologetically if he might have a little

"Did he leave orders that he was to be

put there?," he asked.

"Verbally," I answered. "There's nothing in the will about it."

"Then I hope my young friend of yesterday . . . By the way, don't you want to make sure of his identity?"

"He can tell me when it suits him," I answered. "If I knew officially that he had defied the Court, my position would be difficult. So would his be: his brothers and cousins would see to that."

"But in the meantime these brothers and cousins are scattered over the face of England, proposing to any girl that will listen to them!"

My thoughts went back to the eerie last resting-place in which John Datchley lay brooding over his kingdom. I remembered his vain boast that he did not mean to die yet awhile; and I recalled his malevolent smile as he said that he would see whether his grandsons were young men of spirit, whether they were in earnest and whether they would accept his "invitation to adventure". The entanglements at which Simnel hinted would be wholly to his taste; and he would ask for no sweeter recompense than that, when brother had contended with brother and cousin had stolen cousin's birthright, he should remain as I had just seen him, in possession, challenging his beaten enemies to dislodge him.

"The others have separated beyond recall." I answered. "We must hope they will do nothing irrevocable, but they are impetuous young men, not excluding your

friend of yesterday morning."

George Simnel groaned:

"And you say there are eight others of the same kidney?"

#### Hereafter follows the Adventure of the Impetuous Suitor.



## THE WORLD'S • STRANGEST • • DANCES • •

#### By ANNA PAVLOVA

THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS DANCER, WHO HAS RECENTLY PAID
A RETURN VISIT TO ENGLAND

N a world of surprises no other art can show such remarkable and world-wide variations as dancing. It ranges from stately, solemn movements which can and sometimes do accompany a funeral, to the fastest, maddest and most light-hearted expression of feeling that Ariel himself could ever have devised. For dancing is the natural outlet for all human emotions, rage,

pain, joy, warning, or friendship.

In the dawn of time, when the feelings expressed by humanity were crude and instinctive, shaggy savages in furs used to dance every day. Sometimes it was to express the action of an animal hunt, when one of them would dress up in the head and skin of the quarry and be chased and eventually pretend to die from the realistic sham attacks of the hunters. Before setting out on any expedition against an enemy tribe, the men, fully armed and wearing their wargear, would dance and stamp round the fire, calling down the spirit of victory to go with them. All our modern feasts, such as Christmas, Easter, and so on, marked periods in the pagan year which were all celebrated by dancing of the nations all over the world. It must have been an impressive sight, one of these ritual dances. Presided over by the priests in flowing robes and with venerable beards, and often accompanied by human sacrifice by burning in a wicker cage, the ceremony was attended by every member of the tribe who could walk or be carried. With the sun slanting down into the glade of a primeval forest, often showing a circle of enormous rocks like Stonehenge, the people tramped and danced till they fell from sheer exhaustion. Afterwards there

was feasting and revelry, for this was a time of universal peace.

Dancing to propitiate the gods has always been the savage's form of religion. Even now, in the wilder parts of India and Malaysia, there are tribal dances held at springtime at which, when possible, human or animal victims are slaughtered that their blood may encourage the earth to bear fruitful crops. In many parts of the world to-day, hunting dances still survive. Especially across the north of Asia, the natives imitate the actions of birds, bears, wolves and deer. Negroes dance to represent monkeys in a most amusing manner, yet as solemnly as if their lives depended upon Hottentots dance like a swarm of bees. humming so naturally meanwhile that a traveller might think he had come upon a thousand hives. The Bushmen of Australia dance like kangaroos and frogs.

One of the most curious of negro dances. and one which few white people have looked upon and lived, is the Witch Doctor's Dance. The black, glistening savages form a circle about a tiny fire, and remain like ebony statues. Then the Witch Doctor—a strange emaciated figure clad in ox-horns and a medley of dried skin bags which contain his "charms"-sprinkles on the dying fire powders which make it flame a ghastly blue. In the moonlight, he commences a fantastic dance, waving some favourite trinket on the end of a dried sinew, and leaping more and more wildly until he foams at the mouth and becomes almost mad. Suddenly he stops, crouching like an evil, shapeless shadow in the middle of the circle of negroes. When the moon is hidden, he leaps cat-like

to the edge of the ring. The natives facing him cringe, but he turns aside and strikes lightly at the warrior to his left. The trembling man is instantly seized, dragged out to the smouldering embers and despatched with a single blow of a spear in the throat, his blood extinguishing the fire. Sometimes, other methods of death are chosen; but usually the Medicine-man selects someone he dislikes, or whose possessions he covets. At other times these terrible dances are held to banish a plague, or to bring rain. As recently as a year ago

Scientifically this is impossible; but how explain continual coincidence?

There is religious dancing of a kind among white nations of to-day. And why not, since dancing is really as natural to humanity as talking, singing, or sculpture, all of which are used for religious praise? A New York rector has just introduced classical dancing as a part of his service. In Seville Cathedral, during definite periods of the year, ten selected "choir-boys" perform a dance hundreds of years old. They look like wandering Spanish cherubs,



MADAME ANNA PAVLOVA IN HER BALLET "CHOPINIANA."

a "rain-maker" was brought to justice for human sacrifice, and a considerable outcry was raised among his tribe, who said that a drought which was ruining their crops had broken up in torrential rains on the morning following the victim's death. Incredible as it certainly seems to us of civilisation, there are indisputable authenticated reports of numberless occasions when the witch-doctor's strange incantations have apparently dispelled terrible rainless periods. Travellers whose word cannot be doubted have described how they have seen these old "magicians" seem to create clouds in the sky.

as they rise from their knees, flicking out the time with castanets, and move through the slow and dignified dance. They wear white knee-breeches, white shoes and stockings and red-and-yellow striped tunics with loose wing panels from the shoulders. Centuries ago a Pope forbade the dance, but was persuaded to let it go on until the garments wore out. That they will never do, for they are reverently renewed strip by strip as they wear.

There is one church dance to-day which is attended by the Primates of two countries, the Catholic Archbishop of Germany and the Bishop of Luxemburg. This is the Echternach Procession, one of the most interesting of all the strange surviving dances.



MADAME ANNA PAVLOVA IN RUSSIAN NATIONAL DRESS.

It is held on Whit-Tuesday, and dates back over a thousand years, to the time of a great plague which was supposed to have been cured by it. Thousands of ailing people travel long distances every year to attend

it, in the hope of being cured from their diseases. Critics scoff, but why should dancing not have a healing effect? Miss Margaret Morris has effected some remarkable cures in England at a well-known hospital, and certain it is that epileptics are healed every year at Echternach. It is an impressive sight as well as a feat of endurance. Hundreds of singers march at the head of the procession, chanting St. Willibrord's hymn, written one thousand three hundred years ago by the old Saxon saint who converted the people of Luxemburg. They are followed by a Cross, several banners and a huge After these dance thousands of people, most of whom are invalids, keeping perfect rhythm as they go. The distance covered is one mile, and ends with sixty steep steps up to the church. But the measure is three steps forward and then two back over the whole course, making five paces for each yard covered, and three hundred to mount the sixty steps! The procession, therefore, takes over five hours. Usually some of the older or weaker people fall from exhaustion and are dragged out of the way of the oncoming waves of feet.

Dancing caused an epidemic once in Germany and Italy; and the ignorance of the time attributed the Plague to the quite innocent tarantula spider. The first stages were marked by lethargy from which only music could arouse the victims. Once they rose, they danced and danced, whirling faster and faster till they fell, utterly worn out. According to the records that were left, it was caused by no spider but by fervent religious intensity, and it was very catching, spreading over whole populations in a few days. Its memory is perpetuated by the tarantula, which the Italians dance to-day, and whose nowgraceful movements show the rise and fall of the attack. But we cannot scoff at the strange people of the Middle Ages. Look, to-day, at any dance hall or casino, and again you

will see a nation gone dancing mad. If, indeed, it can be called dancing—this hideous and degrading copying of ecstatic negroes which the world calls the Charleston. Is it sanity for white races to imitate the half-intoxicated shufflings of certain decadent

pared with one of the dream-waltzes of the elder Strauss, which the younger generation of to-day have never even heard or had the



MADAME ANNA PAVLOVA IN "CHOPINIANA."

blacks whose gyrations are banned even by the more respectable of their own tribes? Is our love of art so inclusive that we need to descend to these sources for inspiration? Comchance to judge, all the latest jazz importations from black America are one unsettling, spasmodic, blatant barrage of noise.

This frenzy for dancing has in its time

caused other troubles besides the plague of tarantism. In 1890, in North America, a "Medicine-man" stirred up intense excitement by saying that there was shortly to come the great restoration of the Red Man. Not only were their hunting-grounds to be given back to them, but they were to meet all their departed friends. To prepare them for the reunion, he taught them the Ghost Dance. Such exaltation resulted as to cause

MADAME ANNA PAVLOVA. THE FAMOUS DANCER, IN HER DIVERTISSEMENT
"GAVOTTE PAVLOVA."

the Sioux war and its consequent bloodshed.

But let us turn to pleasanter dances; both the ancient and the modern world can show us them. One of the most beautiful of all time was the Mexican Bird Dance, described by the early travellers in that country of romance. A very high pole, usually the trunk of some enormous tree, was selected, and a number of strong, thin ropes fastened to its top. The dancers, clad in feather garments made from the wonderful exotic plumage of tropical birds, climbed to the

top of the pole, where each attached himself to the end of a rope. They then whirled round and round at a tremendous speed at the extreme ends of the ropes, high above the ground, literally dancing on thin air, and with incredible skill weaving a pattern—a veritable kaleidoscope of colour.

Christmas carols are relics of ancient dances, of which only the words and music have survived. Morris dances, originally "Moorish

dances" from Spain, soon developed into back-grounds for story and legend; the tales of heroes such as St. George, King Arthur, Robin Hood and Hereward the Wake. Some of these live on to-day, though we have forgotten their origins, in the form of "Hunt the Slipper" and "Kiss in the Ring."

In Queen Elizabeth's time, country people put their songs into dance form -much the same songs, too, many of them, in sentimental silliness, the jazz songs which are danced to-day. Most dances originally emanated from the country places where people express natural sentiments in the most natural way. Italy and France had the honour of originating modern dancing, which was first carried out to Psalm tunes, and served as a procession in which to show off silks, rapiers and brocades. In those days, the art was used as a school for courtesy, in which were taught all the graces of the great gentleman or lady.

minuet, coming from Poitu, took Paris by storm; it expressed the spirit of elegance, daintiness and noblesse oblige.

One of the most amusing things about the dancing of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was the tremendous popularity which it gained when the country fashion of kissing during dances became the vogue at court. It is entertaining to note that in the second half of the latter century, when ladies were given bouquets instead of kisses, the gavotte and its companion dances, which had been the rage for so long, died and have never been revived except as stage spectacles. Dances are always a reflection of the manners of a time or place. The graceful agility and imperious courtesy of the Slav, the impetuous politeness of the Gallic races, the easy grace of the Greek, the laughing good-nature of the Netherlander and the direct self-confidence of the American, are all shown in their dancing. Fortunately.

now, the inelegant spirit of jazz is slowly dying, and giving place to common sense and breeding

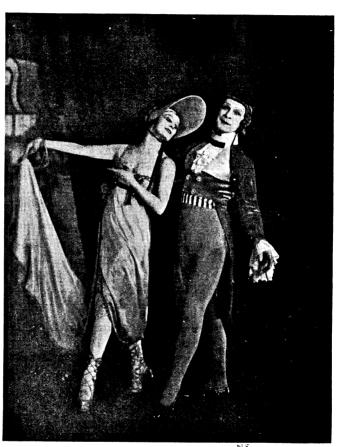
once more.

Some of the most interesting of all the world's strange dances are preserved by the Basques of Southern France and North Spain. They still perform prehistoric measures, exactly as they were performed thousands of years ago. They represent animals such as the bear, horse, and fox; at other times they perform round a tall pole attached to which are hundreds of coloured streamers which the dancers, with great skill, weave into exquisite patterns. Husbandmen dance with wine-skins; there are religious dances in processions and sometimes before altars; and ceremonial dances given to welcome famous people. Enormous sums of money are paid for the honour of dancing the first Saint Basque the stage at the close of a Pastorale. Spain is the natural home of dancing.

Indeed, it is as much a part of the people's life as eating, drinking or sleeping. That it could not be otherwise is easily realised by anyone who has ever seen a Spanish country dance. The happy, excitable crowd react to the clicking of the castanets as though charged with electricity. So do all the heroes—young and old, Spanish or otherwise, for the effect created is amazing. The twang of the guitar, the clatter of high heels, the spangles set in black Spanish hair and delicate Spanish mantillas, and the flashing

glances from Spanish eyes, all so intoxicate the senses as to cause the most determined of pessimists to realise the sunshine of the scene and dance too.

I may myself, perhaps, claim to have performed some strange dances in the course of a not uneventful career. Even my ballet dances are now interesting—perhaps more so than you realise. My Egyptian scenes, for example; they come from the story



MADAME ANNA PAVLOVA AND HER PARTNER, M. VAZINSKY, IN "GAVOTTE PAVLOVA."

found by some bespectacled, grave Egyptologist (who perhaps frowns on dancing), a story carved in eternal stone by the historian of the great epoch of some forgotten Pharaoh, and of the hatreds and loves of his time. With the help of experts who see that our dresses and details conform to period, I put the story into the rhythm of my heart. But it is, as often as not, a true story we are telling—a story of the earth's youth and the passions and fates of the forgotten dead,

perhaps even some former incarnations of yourselves—who knows?

I have danced in strange places. How vividly I remember the day when I danced in the burning sunlight in a Mexican bullring; and how, when I had sunk at last to the ground, those uncultured gauches went mad and shouted and threw to me their sombreros—their most precious possessions of all—as a mark of their esteem. How I loved them for that, my dear, rough, honest cowboys! They proved, too, that the real art of dancing can be truly appreciated by all, whatever their education or tastes.

Once I jazzed, so they said, in Vienna, though really I did but try one single fox-trot, because I am in truth a woman and curious to test for myself this new vogue of which I had heard so much. But I did not care for it.

I have had a stormy life since as a tiny girl in St. Petersburg I used to creep out into the neighbouring woods and dance in desperation to the swans and the moonlight and the trees, and I have danced in stranger

places than London and Paris and Vienna, yet I can proudly say that I have never done anything which it seemed to me could degrade my beloved art, nor consciously said anything which could belittle it. For in it I see not merely the wonder of rhythm, the poetry of motion, the perfection of expression by movement, but something more. All nature dances—the wind, the sea, the clouds, the leaves on the trees, the very stars in their courses. Our blood, responding, dances through our pulses, and we dance, trying to forget for a moment the ugliness that man has made with his slums and battlefields, and to surrender ourselves to the beauty of natural things. Let us dance more, my friends, but let us win more beauty in our dancing as in our lives. The true artist-dancer or what sort you will-strives ever for more beauty. Let us therefore become a world of true artists as we are becoming a world of dancers; for it is by the substitution of beauty for ugliness, in the intangible things as well as the visible, that we dance a little nearer to happiness and to perfection.

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#### TREES IN WINTER.

TREES are such pitiful things, if you see them In the half light,

Hopelessly waiting for someone to free them From the cold night.

Pale with their shame, they stand naked and drooping Under the eye

Of the pitiless stars and the avid moon stooping Out of the sky.

They have no houses to ward off the dreary Darkness outside;

Rooted in terror there, helpless and weary, How may they hide?

If I could—if I could !—I would run to enfold them Close to my breast,

Still their quivering limbs, close their eyelids, and hold them So they might rest

In sleep just as children, when evil dreams wake them, Curled close in the warm,

Groping blind-fingered for someone to take them Out of all harm.

BRIAN HILL.



"'You may take it as rung,' he said quietly."

# BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW STRAW

## By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.," "The Stolen March," "Blind Corner," "Anthony Lyveden," etc.

#### 

ADEGE LAMBERT, spinster, tilted her chin.
"Don't be absurd." she said

"Don't be absurd," she said shortly. "I agreed to marry you, not to ignore the existence of everyone else."

The man fingered his cheek.

"I never see you, Nadège. You know I don't expect you to give up your friends, but—well, we mightn't be engaged, might we?"

The girl shrugged her white shoulders.

"I don't know what you expect. I never pick up a paper without seeing some reference—usually nauseating—to our approaching union: I flaunt your quite excellent ring: you have the right to kiss me whenever you please."

"I want some of your time, Nadège."

Miss Lambert rose to her feet and stretched luxuriously. His eyes on the lithe figure, Dominick Medmenham, bachelor, sat very still. "I'm afraid you're out of date," said the lady. She raised her beautiful eyebrows, to point the sneer. "A woman's time is her own. It wasn't once: she had to give it up right and left: the process was called 'devotion'."

"You mean-"

"This. You're all right. If you weren't, we shouldn't be engaged. As a husband, you'll be quite admirable. Clean, not too good-looking, civil. We shall muck in together very well. But you must be content with that."

"With what?" said Dominick quietly. From over her shoulder, powder-puff in hand, Miss Lambert looked him in the eyes.

"Are you out for trouble?" she said.

Medmenham smiled back.

"You know that I'm not, my lady. But we must have this out. Of course your time is your own, and always shall be. But—well, I don't want to sound soppy, but I rather like being with you. Don't you like

being with me ?"

"If I couldn't bear it, we shouldn't be wrangling now. But I do wish you'd get it straight. A girl believes in amusement: it's the article of her faith: but she doesn't marry for amusement, unless she's a fool. She takes the best man she can get that won't let her down."

"Thank you," said Dominick gently. He rose, stepped to the fireplace and took

the girl in his arms.

"I love you, Nadège," he said simply. "I'll never quote it against you, but—don't you love me?"

Miss Lambert averted her face.

"I imagine I do. I don't know. Need

you be so Victorian?"

"I must be natural," said Dominick, "now and again. And so must my wife." The girl slipped out of his arms: he let her go. "I don't know whether you love me, and I want to know very much."

"At the present moment," flashed Miss Lambert, "the answer is definitely 'No'. But that's your own fault. Everyone dis-

likes being badgered."

Dominick stared upon the ground.

"I want you to be happy," he said: "but I want to be happy too. And I shan't be happy, Nadège, if I haven't your love."

The girl hesitated. She perceived very clearly that she had gone too far. She had meant to lead Dominick a dance; and he had smiled and watched her, but had not danced. And now her pride was involved.

She must confess that she loved him, haul down her pert little flag, or the balloon would go up. Of that there was no doubt at all. Dominick was in earnest: everything was hanging upon her reply. If only he would look up... and see the light in her eyes...

The sudden blare of a fox-trot staggered into the room. The band had returned to its labours, and 'Pony' Bullock would be coming to claim his dance. And that would tear everything up. They couldn't be seen 'philandering'. If only he . . .

As she put out her arms towards him, someone half entered the room, stifled an exclamation and withdrew precipitately.

Nadège could have screamed with rage. Instead, she took her seat upon the arm of a chair, white to the lips.

"Have we done enough damage?" she

said.

Dominick drew himself up.

"I want to know where I am."

"I'll tell you. You're on the edge. And, if you want to stay there, I'd have a care. You can't 'come thro' the rye' in Charles Street. It isn't done. And, in any event, I don't like it. Our marriage will be convenient: your name is quite a good one, and I can put up the wealth. Try to dig any deeper, my friend, and, I warn you, you'll ring the bell."

Dominick looked away.

"You may take it as rung," he said quietly.

Miss Lambert drew off her ring.

"Catch," she said.

Before he had time to turn, she flung the gem. This struck against his shoulder and fell at his feet.

"Sorry," said Nadège carelessly. "Where

did it go?"

"I don't know," said the man.

Then he turned on his heel and walked out of the room. . . .

Five minutes later 'Pony' Bullock, in some dudgeon, abandoned his search for Nadège. By so doing he saved his time. The lady was seated in her long, low, slateblue limousine, unconscious of the magic which the moon was making in the ways, shakily whispering 'That's that' over and over again, with the tears running down her cheeks.

The affair did not end there.

You may break an engagement ten days before the marriage, but those that made the match will scarcely throw up their hats.

More. This particular union was to be the summit of the ladder which the bride's mother had so successfully climbed. Money being no object, such an attainment was to be suitably marked. The splendour, indeed, had already begun to blaze. . . . For this the bridegroom's father had no use at all. The match appealed to him because it was 'sound'. To maintain Black James as the estate required had long been beyond his means. Now he would retire to the dowerhouse, and the fine, old place he had supported would come by its own. The decoration of the dower-house was almost complete. The bathrooms he had installed were in excellent taste. Black James was too big. The dower-house, on the other hand, was entirely convenient.

And so it is not surprising that the affair did not end in Charles Street, or the long limousine.

Upon learning the unsavoury news, Mrs. Lambert politely regretted that things had gone too far and that the passionate matter must take its course. When her daughter stared, she raised her elegant eyebrows and tossed her a note. This was an intimation that Royalty was graciously disposed to honour with its presence the forthcoming Mrs. Lambert could hardly have made a more foolish mistake. Nadège read the note through and laid it down. Her comment would have been unpardonable, had she meant what she said. At first Mrs. Lambert was unable to speak: then she threw back to her father, who had been born in Wapping and remained a master of insult to the day of his death. This was a second error, worse than her first. Nadège heard her out. Then she left Eaton Square, never to return.

Sir John Medmenham's temper had long been as short as his purse, and Dominick broke the tidings at an unfortunate time. His father had just approved the final draught of a marriage settlement which was worth reading.

When he had spoken, the baronet rose to his feet.

"Is this irrevocable?" he demanded.

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Then go to the devil," roared Sir John. He slammed the table before him with the flat of his hand. "Go to the devil and tell him you're short of a home. D'you owe any money?"

"Not very much, sir."

"Send the bills to Forsyth before the end of the week."

"Thank you, sir."

"Don't dare to thank me. I'm doing it for my name."

Dominick took his leave.

There was nothing to be said or done. In time his father might relent: of this, however, he was doubtful. So was Forsyth, solicitor, recalled from the country station by an uneasy groom. Do what the lawyer would, charm he never so wisely, Dominick Medmenham was disinherited that day.

It was nearly a year later that Nadège pawned her umbrella for half-a-crown: this in a quarter of London in which, ten months before, she would have feared to set foot.

The afternoon was sultry, and, as she walked along the coarse, unfriendly road, she felt for the first time the definite stab of Fear. Other stripes she had suffered again and again: Misery, Want, Horror had all laid on: but not until now had she actually been afraid. She was not destitute—tomorrow evening she would be paid two pounds; but in ten days' time the tour would come to an end, and so far she had not succeeded in finding another job.

She had not enjoyed the life of a chorusgirl. Had she been able to obtain work in London, it would not have been so bad: but the provinces were awful. The squalor of the lodgings, the sordid purlieus which harboured the stage-doors, the sulky dreariness of the Sunday journeys' ends would have been intolerable but for the downright bravery of her companions in woe. These laughed, cursed and laughed again, reaped where none had sown, gathered where none had strawed and, having no hope, found their present misfortune matter for jest. Tragedy being their portion, they wrung a pitiful humour from every line: the present being lean, they feasted on the fat of the future: wading in the Slough of Despond, they chanted the Frothblowers' Anthem and, their feet being too heavy, lifted their hearts instead.

Nadège was not of them and could not play their game. Her acquaintance with grief was not yet familiar enough to breed so fine a contempt. It was shame that had kept her going. If they could mock at such music, at least she could face it—somehow. She did, with an excellent grace, and, smothering her horror and disgust, earned her living for ten months, with nothing to spare. And now the tour was ending, and she had nothing in view . . . nothing. . . .

She entered a confectioner's shop and

expended a shilling on a meal. Then she walked to the theatre. This was abominably hot—stifling. Her dressing-room was commanding a fried-fish shop, whose vile burnt-offerings laded the stagnant air.

As she opened the door—

"Come right in, darling," said Mabel Legrand. "Did you see the Prince of Wales? He's waiting for me down below, with a bunch of aspidistras he grew himself. That's what smells so nice."

A shriek of laughter greeted the inelegant jest.

"And Enid Perone's lost her purse. There was one and threepence in it and a letter from another man's wife. But she's not worrying. She thinks the chauffeur may find it when he's doing the car."

"There's the ticket for my suit-case," said Enid ruefully. "I put it up on Tues-

day, and now I can't get it out."

"I'll lend you a cardboard, dear," said Maisie Buck. "It's really the one I keep my sables in, but, now we're back in London, my maid'll be getting them out. Have you all got your vouchers for Ascot?"

Nadège laughed with the rest and observed the familiar rite of undressing and making

up

As she powdered her face, a rap fell upon the door.

"Overture and beginners, please, ladies."
There was no air in the East End that night: the house was packed and reeking: after her four changes Nadège was ready to drop.

With Depression fast upon her shoulders, she dressed more slowly than the rest. As she was leaving the dismal empty room, the storm, long overdue, broke with a crash. When she reached the stage-door, the rain

was falling in sheets.

Nadège hesitated, shrinking. With no umbrella, no coat, to enter the streets seemed madness. Her rooms were two miles away, and the buses which stopped at the corner were sure to be full. A taxi stood in the shadows, but she had not the fare: besides, it was engaged, waiting for somebody else. Perhaps, if she waited a little, the downpour would cease. The trouble was that the buses would soon stop running. Nadège did not want to walk home. For one thing she was dead beat: for another . . .

She peered out into the night: as if in reply, a squall swept up the alley, with a bellow of wrath. Again she drew back, to stand watching the spouts of water bend to the wind.

The taxi-driver stood in the doorway, cap in hand.

"May I give you a lift?" he said quietly. It was Dominick Medmenham.

\* \* \* \*

By the time they had reached her lodgings, the rain had ceased.

"I can't ask you in," said Nadège. "Perhaps you wouldn't come, if I could."

"We could sit in the taxi," said the man, for the length of a cigarette."

Nadège re-entered the cab. . .

"Was this chance, Dominick? Or did you seek me out?"

"It was chance, Nadège. I didn't know where to look. You've changed your name."

"I know. Why are you doing this?"

"One has to live," said the man. "And you?"

"Same here. Mother went over the line. I couldn't stay on."

"My poor lady," said Dominick.

The girl drew a sharp breath.
"I do very well," she said. "It's a lazy life, and everyone's awfully kind. Why did Sir John turn you down?"

"We had a dispute," said Medmenham.
"He's getting old, you know. And, what with the gout and the times, the ice was always thin. And then, one day, I went through. I'm honestly happier—with something to do."

"So'm I," said Nadège stoutly. There was a moment's silence.

Then—

"I'm an owner-driver," said Dominick, " and I live in Mayfair. I've a tiny flat over the garage, as tight as you please. Sometimes one of the old crowd picks me up. They're awfully nice. Stand on the pavement and talk, and, if I've driven them home, they try to make me come in. I drove Milly Bemuse and her brother a week ago. When they got out, she gave me a fivepound note. When I protested, 'Don't spoil my evening,' she said. And old Lord Hillesley was immense. When I set him down at Arthur's, he gave me my proper fare: then he asked me to park the cab and come in to lunch. But I've never seen you, Nadège. Perhaps you've been out of Town?"

The girl nodded.

"Did you ever drive Mother?" she said.
"Once. But she didn't recognise me."

Nadège laughed.

"I can well believe that," she said. And then, irrelevantly, "I'll never go back." Dominick swallowed. "Have you no money of your own,

Nadège?"

"Not a penny. Father had nothing. But I manage all right, Dominick. Of course, I don't dine at the Ritz, but neither do you: and I don't—give fivers to taxis, because I used to know them in other days."

"Oh, my dear," said Dominick.

There was another silence. Nadège dared not trust her voice.

At length-

"I must go," she said quietly.

At once he left the cab and handed her out.

With her fingers in his-

"You've been very kind," she said gravely. "Kinder than I deserved."

Medmenham bowed his head.

"I've been very fortunate," he said. Then he looked up. "I shall be at the theatre to-morrow, to drive you home. It may be wet: and you can't always get a taxi down in those parts."

"Very well," said the girl unsteadily.

She turned away abruptly, stepped across the pavement and opened the door. Medmenham saw a mean hall, lighted by a naked gas-jet. Nadège passed in blindly, thrust the door to behind her and burst into tears.

\_\_

The tour was over.

The curtain had fallen upon Joss Sticks for the last time, and the dressing-room was full of half-hearted laughter and regret.

"Opening Blackpool," said Mabel, "on the nineteenth of June. Don't forget, anyone. But 'care of The Bank of England' will always do."

"I don't like Blackpool," said Enid. "I

lost my washing there."

There was a ripple of mirth. As the scene of some negligence or other, half the towns of England found no favour with Miss Perone.

"Cambridge," said a fat, fair girl, wiping the grease from her throat. "I do hope I shan't get entangled with one of the undergrads. What are you doing, Con?"

A woman of forty lifted a white, peaked

face.

"Resting, m'dear. I'm tired. Enid, here's the address of those rooms at Ilfracombe."

"Auntie Ruddock's?" said Maisie.
"She's a good sort, she is. Eighteen stone in her bandeau, and one long smile. I put her to bed once, an' she never forgets a friend."

Nadège took no part in the chatter, for she had nothing to say. Like poor Constance, she was 'at liberty'—out of a job.

The first to be dressed, she left the room amid a flurry of affectionate goodwill.

As she came to the stairs, somebody cried her name, and there was Mabel Legrand drawing her greasy kimono about her ample limbs.

Nadège returned, wondering.

The other put her arms round her neck.

"You poor baby," she said gently, "don't be a fool. Go home. I don't care what it costs—it's cheaper than going on. I've no heart left, and my skin's turned into a hide: but I'm forty-five next Tuesday, and I've done it for twenty years. I came from a Devonshire rectory. You wouldn't guess that, but I did. Used to keep house for my father, an' drive out to call. Me.... She shook a sob from her throat. "What d'you think I'd give now to be pickin' sweet peas in that garden and ringin' for tea? So go home, darling. Go home—before it's too late. Chuck your pride in the gutter: it's putrid stuff. See where mine's brought me—to Blackpool . . . on the nineteenth of June."

She kissed her roughly, flicked a tear from each eye, laughed and turned back to her room

"See you some day," she shrilled. "So long, Nadège. Be good."

Before Nadège could reply, the door was shut.

The girl passed down the stairs and into the street. Medmenham was there, as usual, to drive her back to her rooms.

The attention distressed Nadège. It was out of all order for Dominick to wait upon her: she could make no sort of return: what was far worse, she valued his coming as she had never valued anything before. Each of those nightly rides was charged to her most private account: she would pay for them one by one in something more pitiful than tears. How many years would pass before she could leave a stage-door without glancing up and down for a taxi which she knew would never be there? Nine, perhaps: he would have driven her nine times.

With these things in her heart, she had protested more than once; but every night the taxi had been waiting, its driver standing beside it, with his hand on the door.

So Dominick drove her from the theatre for the last time.

"I've cost you enough," she said slowly.

Almost roughly the girl withdrew her

"Oh, Nadège. Between friends . . ."

"All right. I'll come. Thank you."

Medmenham lifted his cap.

Arrived at her lodgings, Nadège was out of the taxi before he could leave his seat.

"Good night, Dominick," she said, and put out her hand. "Good night and goodbye and God bless you for being so sweet."

"Why Good-bye '?" said Medmenham,

holding her hand in his.

"The tour's over. I-I open at Black-

pool next week."

"Are you travelling to-morrow?" Nadège tried to think straight. she said 'yes', he would come to drive

"No-o," she said.

her to the station. "Let me drive you into the country-not very far. Into the

woods somewhere. I'll bring some lunch." The girl shook her head. The hold on her "Don't say 'No', fingers tightened. Nadège. I know I'm asking a lot, but I've not had a soul to talk to for nearly a year."

Nadège stared at the badge strapped to his coat. One day in heaven, and how many nights in hell?

"Will half-past ten be too early?"

"No, Dominick. Good night."

When she had the door open, she turned and lifted her hand.

The man waved his cap cheerfully.

Nadège sat under a hawthorn which per-

fumed the air. Her fine, dark hair was free of her little felt hat; her grave, brown eyes were feasting on what they saw. This was a slice of country, smiling beneath the favour of a summer's day—the slant of a flowery meadow, with a buxom hedgerow beyond; to the left a fresh field of young wheat, flanked by a whispering wood; to

were slimmer, and her ankles were very fine. Her slippers had been well cared for, but they were growing old. Her simple, dark-blue dress was the one she had been wearing when she left Eaton Square.

Medmenham read these messages with a full heart.



the right a cherry orchard, rising sharply to the skyline and making a long bank of blossom against the blue; and, rounding the picture, a mountain of apple-green foliage, the thick, gay coverlet of an opposing ridge, the comfortable bulwark against an unkind world.

Her colour was faint, and the droop of her beautiful mouth told its own tale. She had always been slight, but her little wrists Their lunch was over, and the man was sitting beside her, a pipe between his strong teeth. For more than half an hour they had not spoken, but had sat still together, the one looking at the other, and the other gazing on the country and finding there a refreshment which she had never known.

At last the girl took a deep breath. "D'you often do this, Dominick?"

"This is the first time, Nadège."

"The first time? How strange. If I were in your place, I couldn't keep away."

"I've had no one to go with," said Med-"When will you be back in menham. Town?"

"I don't know," said Nadège slowly.

"Won't this tour bring you to London?" "I—I don't know yet. It may. I've not seen the list." She got to her feet. "Those woods attract me, Dominick. D'you think we could walk to them? I'd like to see what's lying the other side."

"Of course. Wait a moment, while I

disable the car."

This was behind a haystack and out of the sun. Medmenham knew the value of a

smart-looking cab.

A path led into the valley and, presently, over a stream by a gray oak bridge. Very soon they were climbing in the shade of the green coverlet to which they had looked.

The ridge commanded a road and a railway The country was handsome, but the road was busy with cars, and a train flung through the fields with a rumbling snarl. Two pale-blue char-à-bancs stormed up the dusty stretch: dogs in the manger, they held the crown of the road: from the rear of the second, two men, wearing women's hats, derided the occupants of a following Rolls: behind the Rolls a dark-red racer was chafing and furiously employing an ear-splitting horn.

Nadège turned away.

"Why is life so beastly?" she said. beastly and hard and cruel? I've been all right: people have treated me kindly wherever I've gone: but I've seen so much ill-feeling, such—such squalor, such needless pain. I stayed in rooms once, where the husband was out of work. He cleaned my shoes and carried up my hot water and actually mended my trunk. Nobody could have been nicer. One day the police came and took him—for 'grievous bodily harm'. His wife jeered at him from the landing while it was going on. It appeared he'd half killed a night watchman who lived next door. Why? Because the man's wife had boasted that, when the hot weather came, they should go to the sea."

'I'm sorry you've seen such things," said Medmenham. "Life out of joint is dreadful: and, once you've seen it, the slightest

whiff of disorder brings it back."

"That's right," said the girl. "Study Hogarth enough, and only a Constable will take the taste from your mouth. That's why these woods and meadows have helped me so. As for that orchard . . . Let's go back there, Dominick. I'm sorry to be so capricious, but I've-I've seen so much of Hogarth that—well, I'm glad of a change."

"My poor lady."

Nadège forced out a laugh.

"It's the contrast—that's all. I used to live so soft. But I can't complain really. I do very well."

"I'm sure of that," said Medmenham. "And the first chance you get I'm sure you'll go right away. Will you take me on as your chauffeur, when you're a star?"
"No. I think I'll build a house here

and give it to you. And that would be useless. Why did Sir John turn you down?"

"We had a disagreement," said Medmenham: "and he went off the deep end."

Nadège stopped in her tracks and laid a hand on his arm.

"Tell me the truth," she said. "Was it because our engagement was broken off?"

"It was," said Medmenham. "But--" Nadège clapped her hands to her eyes.

"I knew it," she moaned. "I knew it. Oh, Dominick, how you must hate me. How you must-

"My dear Nadège, what has it to do with you? How can you blame yourself for the utterly reasonless whim of a man tormented with gout?"

Nadège uncovered her face and stared at

the sky.

"And you wait upon me," she said. "You play the part of a servant to the woman who's smashed your life."

"'A servant'! Because, by the police regulations, I have to sit outside and you in the cab. My dear, what nonsense. Besides, between friends . . . And now let's get back to your meadow and sit in the sun."

In silence they crossed the bridge and

passed through the smiling fields.

"Needless pain," said the girl. "You see, I belong to Hogarth. I'm typical of that vile world I condemn. Those two men in the char-à-banc made me feel sick and tired: and I ought to have been by their side."

Medmenham stood still.

"I refuse," he said quietly, "to let you talk like this. We both know the facts. Because you found me exacting, you broke our engagement off. Whether I was or was not, you were wholly within your rights. More. You did the right thing, Nadège. No girl should ever marry against her will. To saddle yourself with what happened——" "What of the woman who boasted that she should go to the sea? An idle, unkind word—see what havor it made. You can't say she wasn't to blame. Of course she was. She couldn't foresee what would happen: but who ever can? She just did a rotten thing—and bred the most frightful misery as the result."

"But, my dear, you did right." Nadège stared. "She spoke out of careless ill-will: she wanted her neighbours to feel that she was better to do: so she put it across them —a common, but unkind act. But you were doing your duty."

"My duty?"

"Your absolute duty. I don't care how far things have gone: it's not the game to

marry a man you don't love."

Nadège stood like statuary: she seemed to have stopped breathing: her eyes, which were fixed upon a hedgerow, plainly saw nothing at all.

Suddenly, without a word, she turned to

continue her way.

In that moment, I think, she touched bottom: the waters of Retribution passed over her head: Dominick had spiked her last gun: she could not even turn it upon herself.

Arrived at the head of the meadow, she

sat herself down.

"Tell me of yourself," she said dully. "I

want to know how you live."

The man told her faithfully a cheerful, prosperous tale. His life was full and amusing. If it was also hard, he hid the fact. He made good money, would soon have paid for his cab. Foul weather was trying, but brought much grist to the mill. He had four regular clients, two of whom were old ladies that feared the streets; he had twice driven Royalty and once a man to the Bank he was going to rob. His fares interested The comfortable ignorance with which Propriety lay back on the cushions which Scandal had but just left amused him to death. He had set down a potman, to be hailed by a pompous prelate on his way to a Temperance Hall: he had taken Missto the Divorce Court and had carried the President back: a duchess had followed a bookmaker, heavy with wine. . . .

The lively account took Nadège out of herself: the pleasant peace of the landscape ministered to her soul: soon she was looking and listening with a smile on her lips: in an hour they were talking easily, remembering bygone days.

The sun was sinking, when the girl picked

up her hat.

"Time, Dominick," she said, setting her hair to rights. "I shall have to be getting back."

"To your rooms? Why on earth? Let's find a small inn and ask for a country

Nadège shook her head.

"I can't do that," she said slowly. "You've given me the most perfect day I've ever spent. And now I must go." She rose. "I shall never forget it—never. Or how very sweet you were. I'm very grateful."

Medmenham looked up at her face.

"Perhaps, some day, Nadège, you'll let me bring you again."

"Perhaps, some day."

Medmenham got to his feet and put out his hands. The girl put her fingers within

them without a thought.

"And please don't become a great lady before your time. I mean, when I've something to offer, I'm going to ask you again. When I've four or five cabs on the streets and don't have to drive. . . . That means a good income, Nadège. I can't ask you to wait—I know that. And I dare say it's hopeless, and I know that I'm out of court. You can't post-date some statements, and that's what I've done. But, oh, Nadège, I just wanted you to know that I love you—love you far better, darling, than ever before, and God knows when I'll get a chance of telling you so again."

He kissed her hands hungrily. When he raised his head, he saw the look in her

face.

"Nadège!" She nodded.

"I love you, Dominick. I always did. I was mad, I think, that night. I'd meant to make you protest, insist on your rights. You were so gentle and easy: I wanted to get a rise. So I played and lost, and doubled and lost again. And at last I staked all I had. . . . It was rotten and mean and senseless. But I was like that. But I'm not any more, Dominick."

The man drew her into his arms and kissed

her lips. She went on wistfully.

"When I've got a job in London, I'll let you know. And then, if you still want me, dear, I'll be your wife."

Medmenham held her off and looked into

"Do you really love me?" he said.

"Yes, Dominick."

"Then give up your tour. Give up your prospects and marry me, poor as I am.

I've a tiny flat, I told you, and I can keep us both. It won't be very exciting: I'm afraid it'll be very rough. A servant's out of the question. But, if you can stick it, Nadège, you'll make my life. I need you. I've no one now. When I come in, soaked to the skin, I have to light my fire—lay it sometimes and then light it: I must have warmth. But I often go hungry to bed, because I'm too tired to set about getting a meal. I know I'm asking a lot, but——"

Nadège put her arms round his neck and

burst into tears.

Not for five minutes could she control her voice. Then—

"Let's sit down," she whispered.

With his arm about her shoulders, she

began to speak very low.

"I never knew that men loved women like this. I don't think they do. Of course you know that I'm broke. The moment you saw me, you knew I was down and out. I saw it in your eyes, heard it in all you said. You knew I wasn't going to Blackpool, guessed I was out of a job. Yet I might be a leading lady, the way that you've treated me. The question was how to save me-I've seen it all. How to spare my feelings, yet save me still. Your feelings didn't count. And, in the end, you ask me to do you the favour of becoming your wife. You point out how much it will help you, if I will give up my career to cook your food, lay yourself open to a standing reproach, deliberately stigmatize yourself, in order that I may anchor without hauling down my pride."

"I don't seem to have been very clever," said Dominick thoughtfully. "And in common decency I must decline the crown. Our marriage will be one of convenience. You're sick and tired of the sordid, and I don't like

living alone."

"My dear, I'm a beggar. I've fourteen shillings and sixpence, and I'm short of a

iob."

"And I of a housekeeper. I can't afford one. But I can run to a wife." He slid a hand into his pocket and brought out a ring. "And here's the reward of virtue. If you hadn't picked this up——"

Nadège gave a cry of delight.

"I had to, Dominick. It—it seemed so awful to leave such a stone on the floor.

Why didn't you sell it?"

"Because, to restore it to me, you had to stoop. That made it a document. 'I beg your pardon,' it said. And I valued that very much."

Nadège caught his hand to her heart.

"Faithful to a dream," she said.

"Perhaps," said Dominick. "But, you see, my sweet, it's come true."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was some ten days later that Sir John Medmenham swallowed and dabbed at *The Daily Glass*.

"Have you seen this, Forsyth?"

"Your son's marriage to Miss Lambert? I have."

"What the devil does it mean?"

"If I'm to speak frankly, Sir John, I think it means this. The first match was made for them, and that's why it came to nought: but this one they made themselves."

"Bricks without straw," said Sir John.

"They haven't a penny piece."

"Maybe," said Forsyth quietly. "But bricks of that sort last. They're not easy to make, but . . ."

Sir John frowned.

"The point is, what's to be done? I'm ready to let bygones be bygones, but what about that woman?" He wrinkled his nose. "Plenty of straw in that brick. Poor old Lambert. We found together at Harrow in '76."

The lawyer fingered his chin.

"I think if she's left to herself, she'll see the worldly wisdom of coming round."

"What d'you mean?"

"They've a flat in a mews off Mount Street. I should think it's being stormed now. They were both very popular, you know. If Mrs. Lambert stands out, she'll be ostracized."

Sir John sat back in his chair.

"Have you the address?" he said. "I don't mind being ostracized, but I'm hanged if I'll follow her lead."

He called on his daughter-in-law on the

following day.

The latter and Lady Sue Fustian were laying linoleum in the bathroom and doing it very well.

Nadège led him into the kitchen politely

enough.

"Thank you very much for coming," she said. "Dominick's out with his cab."

"Your father and I," said Sir John, "were very old friends. It gives me great pleasure to know that you bear my name."

"I'm an unprofitable daughter," said

Nadège.

"My dear, that's largely my fault. I looked too hard at the settlements and not

hard enough at your eyes. You must forgive me. And I don't at all like Dominick's driving a cab."

"That's my fault, Sir John. I broke the

engagement, you know."

"I'm afraid it was I who—er—reduced him to the ranks. At any rate, between us we upset things. Will you help me to put them right?"

" Of course **I** will."

"I have to go to Vichy at the end of the week. I want you and him to come and take charge of Black James while I'm away. If he likes to work later on, I won't stand in the way. But I don't like his driving a cab. The streets are dangerous."

"You ask me to help myself to something

I don't deserve."

"That's a way conspirators have." He rose to his feet. "Give him this note from me and plead my cause. And I'll call for you to-morrow at four o'clock. We'll walk round to ——'s and inspect the family jewels."

Nadège took his hand in both hers.

"I let you down once," she said. "I'll never do it again."

Sir John stooped and kissed her.

"It's perfectly plain," he said, "that you and I are going to get on very well."

After a word with Lady Sue, he took his leave.

At the entrance to the mews he paused.

"Forsyth was right," he murmured.
"Nothing like bricks without straw." He rubbed his nose reflectively. "Strange fellow Fate. By cutting them off, that

woman and I seem to have done the right thing."

Three weeks had gone by, and Black James was basking in the sunshine, like an old hound.

On the balustrade of the terrace sat Nadège, her eyes roving luxuriously over the famous park. Its deer, its timber, its bracken, its lights and shades made her a pageant of which she would never tire. Beneath their constant ministry, her memories of Hogarth were growing dim.

The girl was happy, as only those are happy who have been given the original of their most precious dream. She clung to her husband like a child, would have fought for him like a tigress, woke of nights and wept over him out of sheer joy.

Dominick emerged from the library, letter

in hand

"From Forsyth," he said, coming across

the flags.

... I have heard from Mrs. Lambert's solicitors. They say 'In the circumstances there seems to be no reason why the Deed of Settlement should not be executed in substantially the same form as that which was finally approved.' I hope you will agree with them, as I do...

"As we were," sighed Nadège. "But I owe you ten months, Dominick. I stole

ten months of your life."

The man put her hand to his lips.

"You're paying me back, my darling, a hundredfold. If you remember, I wanted some of your time."

#### THE LAMENT.

0

THEY say I cannot count
Up to that large amount,
But I who am a mother
Know there was another
Kitten that I kissed,
A kitten sorely missed.

I've sought the world around For my baby yet unfound; And, though I still can purr Over one bit of fur, I who am a mother Know I had another.

MAY I. E. DOLPHIN.

## LITTLE TOTEASE

### By MRS. HENRY E. DUDENEY

URNFORD was self-made; and that may be the best sort of man! He had done it by a meticulous attention to detail, and never would he take anything for granted. In science you dare not; and he was a rising scientist; original and yet with a useful popular touch. People outside the exclusive circles were beginning to talk of him; he received tempting offers for newspaper articles. He found himself in society; and this, to Durnford, entirely selfmade, was delicious. He never went out to dinner, especially if his host had a title, without a complacent thrill.

At this enchanting stage in his career, he developed the notion of studying country aspects at first hand. He must see for himself: he must live the life. Very likely for months, might be for a whole year, he would bury himself in some remote place amidst simple people. He would strive to see things entirely from their point of view. And when he had saturated himself with rustic philosophies, he would return to London, shut himself up in his chambers and write a monumental book. It should be long, published luxuriously and at a big price. Not one detail of crops, cattle, farming implements, lambing time, the dairy, products of the orchard, pastoral land, or arable, did he mean to miss. It should be displayed, docketed; put upon a logical basis, and seen from the angle of the scientific mind. Not a touch of poetry—that destructive stuff! For if Durnford distrusted one thing in life, it was that enervating quality called Romance. He would, naturally, having dealt with the products of rusticity, deal with the people who produced. But he would show only their practical side, and, as a matter of fact, he did not believe that they had any other. The stuff that some idealists wrote about rustics was flother; it was pure imagination. And as such you must take it. For did it not stand to reason that if a man got up at four in the morning to milk the cows, feed the pigs and so on, he was not in a fit state to lean over a gate

on a moonlight night and make love to a girl! You would naturally want to kick off your heavy boots and go to sleep.

It did not follow that Durnford was fool enough to dismiss Love: for it was a necessary part of life; civilised or savage. He meant some day, not just yet, to marry. It must be a good marriage; and he would prefer some young woman with a title. he could love her as well as be proud of her family, so much the better for that! He considered himself extremely wise; yet he was only at the letter A of experience upon that afternoon when he travelled down, first class, to Horsham, left his luggage in the cloak-room, and then drove out to Little Totease. It was his last day of cool detachment; of merciless weighing up. debating, deciding, formulating. Life, hereafter, would never again be a cut-and-dried affair. He did not know this; otherwise he might have given up this pet idea of a monumental book on the rustic.

He had been told by a man at the club of a tiny farm called Little Totease, a few miles from Horsham. The man at the club, whose car broke down one day at the top of a cart-track, had been given tea there, and Miss Botting, the farmer, had said that if she could get a really nice quiet lodger for the summer months she wouldn't be above considering an offer; since farming was bad. Durnford had cynically laughed when the man at his club told him that; for one of the things that he did know about country life was that, with farmers, times were always bad and the weather was exactly what they did not happen to want at the moment. He did not write to Miss Botting. He drove out haphazard from Horsham to try his luck; for impulse was part of the plan. It was a wet spring and he had never seen anything like the evil yellow of that sticky clay in the cart-track at the top of the lane. The taxi-driver declared himself unable to drive down; so Durnford paid him and sent him away. Assuming that Miss Botting had changed

her mind or had already got a lodger, she might recommend another farm. And, at the worst, it would be collecting "copy" to walk back to Horsham. He could watch old men cleaning out the overflowing ditches or chopping at some luxuriant hedge. would talk to them. He was in no hurry; if he could not begin country residence today, he would do it some other day. was destructive of clear thought. walked down the lane along the squelchy grass at the side and he came in sight of Little Totease; with its high roof of Horsham stone; its prim garden, all gay; its burly farm buildings and trampled yard. Cows, with their solemn, watchful glances, looked over the barred gate of grey wood as if they wondered at him.

A big chap, ferociously simple in appearance (you might so express him), came round from somewhere, with an inquiring look in his stubborn, quiet eyes. Durnford, feeling that something was expected, briefly related the legend that had been conveyed

to him by the club member.

"You'd best talk to Miss Botting," said the rustic. "Goo in at the front gee-at. I'll get round to the back and tell her you're

coming."

He departed, suddenly as he had emerged. Durnford was curiously elated; he had seen, face to face, his very first rustic and a handsome chap, for all his mud and disorder. He absorbed the profound fact that this young man with the staring yet by no means stupid eyes had said "gee-at" for gate and "goo" for go. There would of course be a special chapter on dialect and he must listen to every word that they said, and especially when they supposed he was not listening. He must also watch their gestures when they spoke. And if they used any queer phrases he must inquire into the origin of such. It would be minute yet quite enthralling work. He looked approvingly at the flowers each side of the path as he walked towards the front door. were luscious and tumbled; as borders are when the weather is wet and the farmer is too busy to bother. Durnford had a theory of his own; and it was that rustic people cared for nothing but money. Quite right too! For money gave you everything you were likely to want. He loved money; because he was just beginning to make it.

Broad door painted a dismal brown! It opened widely as he reached the step and Miss Botting stood before him. He instantly found himself studying those wonderful fur-

rows and crinkles in her face. Each one must mean something. She was elderly, lean and rigid; yet shrewd and twinkling kindness lived in those little grey eyes. Also, or he fancied it, cupidity; and this fitted in with his cut-and-dried theory of the avaricious rustic. Yet he was prepared to pay; for paying would prove worth it. Country life and country people had, so far, been comprised statistically; the affair had been tabulated yet not comprised. And he, Durnford, his brain now working fast, yet pompously, would breathe life into these dry bones. She politely motioned him into the house and he went. There was a small, over-decorated room on one side and, on the other, a bricked passage leading obviously into the kitchen places. For, as he entered, there had been a busy clatter and swish; but, as he and Miss Botting went into the parlour, sound ceased. He wondered if anyone looked through the door, which was left ajar. He sat down, and so did Miss Botting. The dank yet homely airs of the place interested him immensely and he noted, with that alert eye, the furniture. In one corner a grandfather clock; against one wall a handsome secretaire bookcase. The rest was rubbish, and the orgy of frightful ornaments amazed him. Where did they buy such things? He was already picking up copy for his book like mad! This old woman in the black frock and the little black apron, cut round, trimmed with lace and ornamented with a pocket, was looking him over coolly and listening as he informed her that he had been told by a friend she was willing to accept a summer lodger. He added that he was a student and wanted

"You'll get it," she chuckled. "We're wunnerful quiet at Little Totease. There's on'y me and my nephew, Peter Botting, and the gell. I've always said I'd take a lodger somewhen; may as well take you, if so be

you'll pay a week in advance."

She smiled in a friendly yet wary way; adding, before he could speak, that her terms for board were four guineas a week, with extra if he wanted a fire. He could have this room to sit in and he could take his meals here or have them with the family. Durnford, accepting with alacrity—although four guineas was a stiff price—said he would prefer to take his meals with the family, as he did not wish to give trouble. He added, with a look at the bookcase, might he use that for his papers?

"Sure!"—Miss Botting was genial—

"though they'd be safe enough if you left 'em on the table. I don't take much interest in print, and Beatie, she can't read."

"Beatie!" Durnford was mechanical yet enthusiastic: for the idea of any person, not being a born idiot, who could not read in these days, was amazing. He had, perhaps, struck a richer vein than he had hoped for.

for.

"The gell I've got," explained Miss Botting, and she arose. "You'd like to see your bedroom? She's a good gell; I don't ask for a better. And clever—why, there's nothing she can't do. Book brains ain't the only brains. The cleverest people I've known couldn't tell big A from a bull's foot. And that's an old saying. There was Mrs. Gearing; such a woman for ironing and clear starching. There was old Teddy Sayers; took all the prizes at ploughing matches for miles round."

Durnford, alone in his bedroom, with a tester bedstead, a rag rug and illuminated texts upon the wall, was enchanted with his luck; with the legends of illiterate Mrs. Gearing and Teddy the ploughman; with his immediate prospect of meeting Beatie who could not—in these enlightened days—even read and write. He also remembered that Miss Botting had said "wunnerful"; that she called a girl "a gell." This was not much for a chapter on dialect. Yet he had barely expected to find anything. One of his theories was that when we lost pure vowel sounds we lost dialect also.

He was supposed to work, yet, as Miss Botting remarked to Beatie, the parlour saw precious little of him. She was just as well pleased, for she did not want dirty boots and a man's tobacco ash on her Kidderminster carpet. He was a great deal on the farm; talking to Peter or the men. He was here to see the accredited sights, and it annoyed him when they said that, with a wet summer like this-the wettest knownhaymaking and perhaps harvest would be a failure. He wanted it to be otherwise; he wished for experience at its ultimate and Yet he was soothed by a succession of dim hot days, with a thin vapour of rain. And he refused a fire in the dank front room, which had such a strange smell—Miss Botting translated it as dry-rot in the woodwork. But Durnford, although not psychic, had a grim idea that it was something else.

He walked about the farm in his mackintosh and holding up his umbrella. The labourers laughed gently; he was probably

daft! He talked a great deal to Peter Botting; that vast, most capable person who, until you got to know him, seemed sullen, vindictive, even. But Durnford was beginning to understand the many forms under which Sussex shyness hid itself. found, too, that Botting was an intelligent chap who, amongst other things, read his, Durnford's, weekly scientific article in a Sunday paper. Not only read; but understood, commented, even dared to differ, speaking earnestly, as man to man. His quiet yet definite "I don't quite follow that " or " I differ from you there" nettled Durnford. The fellow had a brain and used it. This was irrelevant in a rustic; it was not what one had bargained for.

The member of the family who really piqued and delighted Durnford was Beatie the "gell." As time went on, as he began to reckon his stay at Little Totease by months not weeks, he found himself more and more in the kitchen or upon the land; less and less in the chilly sanctity of the parlour. His shorthand notes for the book were voluminous; and most of them referred to Beatie. He studied her appearance to begin with; and quite impartially. He was not here to let feeling come into the matter. Her face in repose had the clear reflective expression of a cow's. He put it in his notes as "empty and wise." But when she laughed or spoke she changed entirely. Her eyes wrinkled up at the corners and he had not seen upon any woman's face such a dainty nose. Her skin was like—like everything lovely that he could think of; sunrise, or the bloom upon fruit. His mind was awakening to beauty in a disconcerting way; for he distrusted beauty. And he knew that this girl, if she were in Society (always with Durnford spelt with the Capital!), would be a positive beauty. He was sorry that she wore upon her head that uncompromising cap of stiff muslin; for it hid her hair. was once possessed by an insane desire to snatch it off and see if she were shingled. He asked her, with solemn eagerness, "Is your hair short or long?"

She returned, with her bright impudence: "Don't you ask no questions, then you wun't hear no lies."

She took herself off to the sink, where she made a tremendous swilling. Durnford, through the open door which divided kitchen from washhouse, could see her scarlet cheek and neck. She seemed angry or afraid. Which was it? And he was angry with her, yet deliciously tender. Why?

"She's lively! But—there—she's young. We must make allowances, sir."

Miss Botting, shelling peas at the white table, was apologetic.

She did not wish to offend four guineas a week.

Durnford walked straight into the washhouse and, standing by the sink and looking distastefully at the brownish water into which Beatie had recklessly plunged her hands, he asked:

"When you go to collect the eggs, may I come too?"

"Come if you like "-she was laconic."

To go with her to the hen-house—or to feed the pigs, or to watch her hang up washing; he holding a rush basket full of pegs —all of this was necessary experience. He very gravely put it to his mind that way; with the astringent reminder that—otherwise—why was he paying four guineas a week? This weighed with him, as it weighed with Miss Botting. He watched Beatie on this particular day, collecting delicate eggs; some white, some brown,—and those that were very new-laid had a bloom on them; as the bloom upon Beatie's cheek. She was certainly a pretty girl, and, as certainly, wasted here. Yet what else could you do with her? This delicious country product who could not even read and who did not want to learn; was not Little Totease her proper place? He had wished to teach her and had often said so. Her reply was always the same:

"Don't want to be teached."

This afternoon, coming home from the henroost, they dawdled, and it was Beatie who suggested that they should sit a bit in the hay-field. It was cut and heaped into stooks. Durnford, with his back dug comfortably into one of these sweet-smelling heaps and with Beatie close up to him in her skimpy cotton frock, was strangely happy. He had never felt like this before.

She asked, thoughtfully tickling his neck

with a straw end:

"What's your Christian name?"

"It's on most of my letters and you put them outside my door every morning."

He was stiff and restrained; perhaps because he hated his absurd Christian name.

"S'pose I do!" said Beatie. "Can't read, can I, Grummut?"

Grummut! There was another word! Yet he had almost given up tabulating; for Beatie had so many. Moreover, could it be possible that his interest in this monumental book of his was waning? He did not know; he was rapidly dissolving into a new perturbing vagueness of mind; all his values and theories were in solution. He could absorb nothing except the beguiling fact that he was sitting with his back at a hay-stook; close to Beatie and she reflectively tickling his cheek with a straw.

"My name," he said at last, "is Daniel. And I don't know why, in naming me, they were guilty of such idiotic alliteration."

"Litter what!" She burst out laughing and dropped her straw. "I shall call you Danny. It's a nice sort of petting name."

"While we're on names, what's yours?" Durnford was abrupt; for he felt afraid.

"Beatie. You know that."

"Yes, but the other."

"Oh—Taverner. Silly name!"
"It's dignified." Durnford was earnest and he frowned slightly—he felt that he'd heard it before.

"Common as peas in the part I comes." from," said Beatie. She spoke with that strange dignity possessed, possibly, only by the unlettered.

"Plenty of Taverners in the house and more of 'em in the graveyard," said Beatie.

She was not laughing and screwing up her eyes, as she often did when they talked together. That look was upon her "wise and empty," as Durnford had tabulated it.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"Chiddingly."

"Where's that?"

"T'other part of Sussex; hill parts. Chidding-ly, Helling-ly, Hoath-ly; three lies an' all true. That's what we ses."

She broke into one of her sudden torrents of laughter, leaning into the hay-stook and hiding her face.

"Why did you leave home?"

She looked up, staring; suddenly grave.

"Got to get my living. You dunno nothing about that."

"Don't I?" Durnford was warm. "Always had to earn mine."

"What at?"

"You know that I write books; and for the newspapers."

"What's print to me?" She was simple.

"Beatie, why won't you let me teach you to read and write?"

"'Cause I don't want my head crammed full of ideas, like mites in a cheese. That's. why, my lord."

She sometimes called him that, and infused into it some curious insolence. She. was a curious girl and Durnford studied herwith passionate seriousness as she leaned. back and looked softly down the field, where Peter Botting was hay-making with his men. An idea came to Durnford. Perhaps she was in love with this Botting chap; and the match would be excellent for her. Yet the idea failed to please Durnford. He did not wish to watch her any more as she "Timmersome?"

"Afraid I wouldn't suit Miss Botting."

"You don't want to leave her, then?"

"Break my heart to goo," Beatie said and stared down the hay-field again.

"You like young Botting?"

"Who doesn't?" She was curt.



"Botting arose and, with a curiously primitive air of threatening, he bared his great arm to the shoulder."

looked down the field, with that betraying look.

"Who have you got at home?" he asked.
"Father and mother?"

She turned to him.

"Feyther and stepmother. She's why I come away. And I wur timmersome at first."

"He's clever," Durnford admitted.

"He wun't be no happier for that, poor chap," said Beatie, and, picking up her eggbasket suddenly, she walked off. She would not talk on the way home.

After hay-making, came cold days; with a north wind and a steel sky. Durnford, sitting by the kitchen fire, looked up from

his book or his shorthand notes and saw the white syringa outside the back door; heavy with blossom, white to the lips. He had finally discarded the parlour; he hated it; always had. He did not wish to be alone. He wished—was that it ?—to watch Beatie at her work. Yes, watch her all the time. Miss Botting rather resenting the fact alone in the house, for hours, with Beatie. But she shut herself up in her bedroom and when she came down to, as she put it, "wet" the tea, he would swear she had been crying. They were a silent trio round the table; Peter, for some reason, also seemed upset. There was one dusky night when Durnford

happened to catch Beatie at the rain-water

butt, filling galvanised can. Near the butt was a lavender bush and the bunches of grey foliage stuck out like a woman's full skirt. The sort of skirt Miss Botting wore! Beatie's frocks were wisps of blue, mauve, or pink; with a dreary black stuff one in the afternoons after, as she quaintly put it, she had "cleaned" herself. He carried the brimming can into the washhouse, and those were marvellous moments, walking in the dark; past that lavenbush that looked like an old woman's skirt! Directly they got into the washhouse she looked



"He understood that he had for a long time hated Peter Botting."

that he was always "under her feet" as she went backwards and forwards to the range, yet bore with him. She privately dismissed him as "a little touched." Londoners were. Could you wonder?

Strange, small events broke the dullness of these bitter days. And everything that happened touched Durnford keenly. His emotions were like a bared nerve; always tingling. There was the day when Beatie blankly refused to go to the annual sports in the Vicarage garden. "I ain't fit," she said stubbornly. Durnford watched Miss Botting go off alone; in a surprising beaded cape and a large hat with a violet feather. He had the delirious idea that he would be queerly at him, then ran away. Why-so often-did she run away? Why, so often, did he feel that she'd been crying?

There was that horrible sight—more than once—of little pink pigs, packed and squealing in a netted cart. They were going to market and going to be killed. The sight and the sound of it turned Durnford sick. So many things did-and yet he had to learn them! He was finding that country life could be cruel; that country people were—of necessity—callous. Yet it was a broad, sweet life; and infinitely wise. He found that he had half forgotten London; he wondered if he would ever go back. Only the work that he had to do; only the cheques that he got for doing it, remained to assure him that London was!

Once—worse horror still—they killed a pig of their own at Little Totease. Ghastly preparations preceded the kill; endless activities came afterwards. Food also—and toothsome. He remained filled with fastidious horror; yet he ate the chitterlings and lardy cakes that Miss Botting produced. Horror and appetite—all part of the programme!

There was also that day when he could not find Beatie, and wandering, quite desolately, he came upon Miss Botting skinning a rabbit, and turning the skin as deftly

as she'd turn her Sunday glove.

"Funny thing"—her shrewd eyes, always indulgent, twinkled up at him—"but Beatie don't take kindly to this kind of job. Turns her all fainty-like. So she's out in the harvest-field with Peter."

Durnford went away; into the world which was dim yet golden: sulky sky; ambery harvest being carted home. He saw Beatie on one of the cart-horses. Peter was leading it and talking to her solemnly. A solemn chap—and what had he got to say? She was listening and idly flicking the mare's great back with the whip, as she brushed off flies. The loaded cart went by. Neither of them took any notice of Durnford. Perhaps they did not even see him. Certainly they did not want him. He returned to the house, shut himself savagely into the dank parlour—a place never really warm; this unwanted, unused place! He let down the flap of the secretaire, took out his pile of shorthand notes and was staring at them blankly, with strange disgust and even shame, when there was a knock. Without waiting, Peter Botting came in; without being asked, he sat down. Those great hands, tightly gripping his great knees, subtly expressed some menace. Durnford —with the patronising grin—the grin he kept for this chap Botting—turned round from the secretaire.

"You'd best clear out of Little Totease," said Botting volcanically and without the least warning.

" Why?"

Durnford, his back to the window, upon his lips that maddening smile of patronage, was startled; he was, also, triumphant, yet also unhappy.

"Really, my good fellow," he added, "you

talk in riddles.'

It delighted Durnford to say this, "my good fellow." For, in the past as he made

his laborious social ascent, he had been frequently "good-fellowed" himself. He understood how this could make one writhe. He also understood that he had for a long time hated Peter Botting. The farmer looked up; with that simple stare—which, yet, was by no means stupid.

"It's about Beatie," he said more calmly. "She was half mine before you come. Now she wun't give me a civil word. Flying for higher game, I reckon. But you'd best goo, Mr. Durnford, before there's trouble."

"What trouble——"

"This trouble." Botting arose and, with a curiously primitive air of threatening, he bared his great arm to the shoulder.

"I'll fight you for her, if I find you here

after supper to-night."

He walked out, even more suddenly than he had walked in. The sleeve of his blue shirt remained rolled to the shoulder. Durnford through the closed window watched him walk away. Then he, also, went out. went to find Beatie. There was a little orchard at the side of the house; it was crowded with crooked trees and all the boughs were heavy with small fruit that would not ripen because the summer was unkind. Under one of them she was sitting, with her knees hunched up and her cap upon the grass. Durnford never before had seen that hair, which grew crisp and yellow; like a shock of wheat. The sight informed him fully of what he had known for a long time; he was in love with Beatie Taverner. He -with his ambitions-wished to marry "the gell." And he could imagine no more exquisite fate. For all that, he would not marry her; neither wild horses-nor her wonderful hair-should make him. He sat beside her; she turned away. He said

"Why have you been unkind to Peter

Botting?"

After a considerable pause, during which she turned over and lay face downward in the long grass—

"Dunno why," said Beatie, almost in-

audibly.

"Dear"—Durnford spoke with admirably controlled passion—"you do know why; and I know. Because you love me, Beatie, and I love you."

She appeared to be listening, but she would

not look at him.

"It would never do, my darling."—Durnford was feeling incredibly miserable yet prudently firm: his heart might break, and so might hers; yet—never—would he ruin

his prospects. "You wouldn't be happy in my sphere of life," he concluded.

"Reckon I wouldn't," said Beatie, after another long pause.

She flung her head down. Durnford felt that she was crying.

"For you," she told him simply, "belong to gurt houses. You'll marry Lady This, That or T'other."

Durnford thrilled. Enchanting Beatie; so sweet and so unerringly wise! And this certainly ("for sure," as she would have said!) was the time to leave her. It was

was prudently gone well before suppertime.

The man at the club said indolently, when he saw him:

"Got back? How about the big book?"

"Chucked the idea." Durnford was brief and savage.

"But you were full of theories, my dear chap."

"Very likely I was, but theories are misleading. Nothing in them. The country is



"He-with his ambitions-wished to marry 'the gell."

the psychological moment. If he stayed one second longer, he might be for ever lost. But, before he went, he bent over and kissed that yellow hair; so like a wheat-shock. She did not move. She was probably crying. She would, naturally, marry Botting, who was an excellent match; for he would some day inherit Little Totease.

Durnford returned to the house. He found Miss Botting, explained to her that he was recalled by urgent business to London, paid her four guineas instead of notice, packed up, gave the address to which his luggage must be sent, and

the place to open your eyes. I can tell you that."

He walked out of the club and through the horrid streets. He was thinking of Little Totease, of harvest-fields and a girl's head that looked like harvest. Yet he regretted nothing; he felt convinced that he had acted wisely.

He got next day an invitation to dinner from Lord Wannock. This consoled him. For Wannock himself was a distinguished scientist and he had once openly snubbed Durnford at a lecture. The snub had implied that he considered Durnford merely empirical. Yet now he had asked him to dinner. The Wannock town house was in Grosvenor Square, and magnificent, and Durnford experienced his usual thrill at the mere sight of men-servants. He would perhaps, however high he climbed, remain a flunkey himself.

And at this memorable dinner he metshe sat next to him-Wannock's only daughter, the Honourable Beatrice Taverner. She crinkled up her eyes and looked at him. Never in this world had there been a more delicious nose! Durnford, for a moment, could not see the men-servants, who were smoothly rotating. And the conversation between twenty-five people at one long table —hummed like a hive. Bees had swarmed while he was at Little Totease, but he had prudently remained indoors; he did not wish to be stung—perhaps on the face! would have been an object of ridicule. This, to be ridiculous, he invariably dreaded more than most things.

"Beatie," he said, and his voice sounded to him absurdly like the popping of a cork.

To the butler, who was urging softly, "Champagne or Burgundy, sir?" he returned with a complete absence of civilised manners, "Cider."

They had drunk cider at Little Totease. "I told you," she was saying smoothly—and he watched her lapping up soup as if nothing unusual had happened between them—"that my name was Taverner, that I had a stepmother, that I came from Chiddingly. Three lies and all true! And don't let your nice hot soup get cold."

Durnford, dreamily taking up his spoon, remembered that Wannock had married twice, that the family name was Taverner;

the family seat at Chiddingly.

"Tell me about it," he said helplessly.

"I will if you'll try not to look so eloquent. For the Marquis of Ansty is opposite; that small young man with rough eyebrows. He and I are engaged to be married; and he's horribly jealous. But I love them to be jealous; Peter Botting was."

"You didn't love Botting?"

"But didn't I!" Her voice was hilarious yet piteous too, and she dropped it. "You were fool enough to think that I loved you. You were a fool clean through, weren't you, poor Danny? Fancy believing that I could not read and write—in these days! Very often I could see that you were figuring it out in statistics, behind your horn-rimmed glasses. Education costing so much per head, at an average of—""

"Beatie! I'm going to call you that for the very last time. Don't mock me. Tell me things instead. How did you get to Little Totease?"

"Simple enough, and I must cut it short, because Freddy—my Marquis—is getting ferocious, though he could never put up the fight that Peter Botting would have done. You were afraid of Peter Botting and you ran away. I don't wonder. We had a bet, Freddy and I. You see, he lives in the country, middle of Wiltshire, and cares for nothing but sport. He said I couldn't keep away from London six months. I bet I would. If he won I'd marry him. If he lost I wouldn't."

"Who won?"

"He did. Haven't you seen the notice of our forthcoming marriage in *The Times*?"

"Why did you let him win?"

"I saw to it that he did. I did not mean to make a fool of myself. I would not marry Peter Botting, although I loved him. I kept my head—as you kept yours. But we may live to regret it."

"I regret it now."

"Naturally you do—now. Forgive me that. Sorry—but I couldn't help it. Perhaps you deserve it."

"I don't see why you shouldn't say that

to me, or anything else."

Durnford was humble. "I deserve—everything."

He looked at her, with sad adoring eyes. "Don't look at me like that, or Freddy will spring at you and break the family Sevres. Let us keep calm. Listen while I tell you how I got to Little Totease. I did it all very thoroughly. I took a course of lessons in housewifery; and a course in cookery and a course in dairy-work. quite a long time—but it was fun. I took myself off. I do pretty much as I like since Father's second marriage. arranged it that way from the first; on a logical basis. He pleased himself—his way, I was to please myself—mine. It's quite a working system. I put my name down at a registry office in Horsham and dear Miss Botting snaffled me and—that's all. You're eating nothing. There's something rather jolly coming next course. Try it."

"Nothing," said Durnford with romantic misery, "could be so jolly as chitterlings,

when we'd killed the pig."

"You were a great fool to believe in me," she said again, and not without sympathy.

"Yes." He spoke more simply than he had ever spoken. "I was a fool."

He looked up from his plate; it was with an effort that he touched a morsel to-night. He surveyed her in all the exquisite simplicity of a rose-coloured frock, of a great rope of pearls. This enchantment he had dismissed, as not worthy of him. He could see himself again -such a fool and such a prig-walking out of the crooked orchard, hugging himself with worldly wisdom. She was now looking at him, with her reflective glance, "wise, yet empty "-the glance of a cow!

I shouldn't have had you," she said, uncannily divining his thought. "Nonever. There was one dangerous moment, on a cart-horse, when I nearly took Peter Botting; but I thought better of it and I'm glad. Freddy is safer, for we get on so jolly well. Perhaps that's the secret

of a successful marriage."

"Quite sure you're glad?"

"For the present—quite." She was equable. "If ever I find out that I'm not, discovery will come too late. I shall be the Marchioness of Ansty, buried alive in Wiltshire. Very pleasant too. Little Totease gave me a passion for the country."

"But what"-Durnford was childishly

bewildered—" will happen to me?"

"That ought to be your affair; yet I propose to take a kind interest in you. I can tell you what won't happen—my husband will not ask you to dinner. He already hates you. We are nearly through with too much food—do you remember our delicious meals at Little Totease? So simple and yet such lots to eat. You must make a good marriage, of course. We will manage that. I will pick out for you Lady This, That or T'other. You deserve to get on, for you keep your head so admirably!"

She spoke with a flick of tender contempt

and it reminded Durnford of the idle way she had used a whip on the cart-horse, that day when she, with Botting, slowly rode home from the harvest-field. And they had taken no notice of him.

Dinner was over. He had to stand and watch her go gracefully away: with all the other women in their loveliness and riches. They went like a trail of flowers. Perhaps he might never see her again. Yet she had once been Beatie to him! At the sink, or swilling the bricks-" flowing them down," she used to say. Or picking up eggs, or scraping new potatoes, which, very likely, she had dug up first. She had been "the gell," and how he had loved her! He knew it now.

She had gone through that door with the rest. He might never again see her; upon equal terms—or any terms. he would remember that last unguarded look which they had exchanged. It had been a confessing look, wise and piteous. For he had loved her and she had loved Botting. She, at least, knew how much that, by prudence, she had forsworn. As for him—Durnford; he'd never had the ghost of a chance. She had gone. He was alone with the men; at the long table with its broken places. The little Marquis with the bristling eyebrows leaned across.

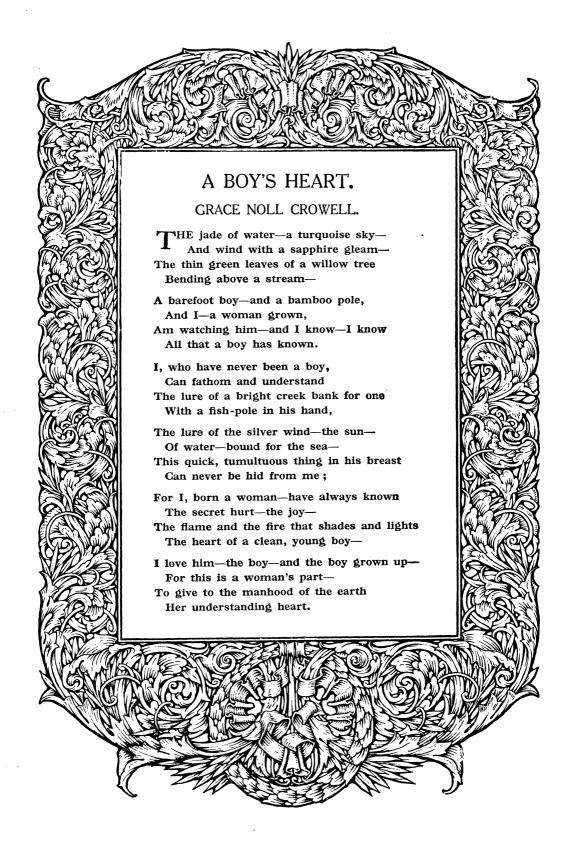
"Has Beatrice been telling you our little yarn about the bet?" he asked, cracking a walnut and rather looking as if he'd like to flip the shells in Durnford's face.

He spoke with that touch of good-natured insolence—always too intangible to resent —which Durnford, before now, had marked in aristocrats. But some day he would marry an aristocrat himself-Lady This, That, or T'other! Then he would be even with them all.

### THAW.

ILVER—the shining way that I must tread; Jewels-the drops that hang above my head From trees like filigree against the sky, Stirred by the little winds that wander by. Winter is sleeping for a little while, And Spring has brought to me her virgin smile; I have forgotten that her flowers must die: I only see her glory in the sky. Silver my path and glad my speeding feet, Joy is so swift, and life so frail and fleet. But I have found some sacred secret thing Older than death—a gift the angels bring.

MARJORIE D. TURNER.



## PIGEON BLOOD

## By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

**(P)** 

ENVENUTO CELLINI ranked the ruby—the Oriental gem—higher than the diamond, and ten years ago a stone of perfect colour weighing five carats would have been worth ten times as much as a diamond of equal weight. In fine, the value of a ruby depends upon its size. Unfortunately, rubies are easily imitated. I have said elsewhere that I am not a lapidary. It is true that we buy unset stones wherever we can find them, but as a rule we deal with the wholesalers. It is safer and cheaper in the end.

(

It was shortly after the Boer War that a weather-beaten man in rough tweeds, who was announced as Major Partridge, came into my private room and told me a thrilling story which I wish I could repeat in his words. To challenge my interest he began by pulling out of his pocket half a handful of uncut stones which he dropped under my nose as if they were peas.

"What do you make of 'em?" he asked. He spoke carelessly, as if he didn't care a brass farthing what I made of them, but I detected a wistful, indeed a pathetic, anxiety which underlay his gruff tones.

"They look like rubies," I said cautiously.

"But—are they rubies?"

He leaned back in his chair, eyeing me keenly, fumbling in his coat pocket. Before I answered he said jerkily:

"Would it annoy you, Mr. Corwen, if I lit

my pipe?"
"Not at all. Pray do so, whilst I examine these stones."

His lean, brown fingers were trembling as he filled an ancient briar, but his blue-grey eyes rested steadily on mine.

"Do you know anything about rubies?"

I asked.

"Nothing. That's why I came straight to you. I landed from Africa yesterday. I found these stones in unexplored territory south of the Equator. I risked my life a dozen times to get them. Now I want to know whether I have been on a wild-goose chase or not."

"The ruby is a mineral of limited distribution. They are found in Burmah, Afghanistan, India, and North America. and possibly elsewhere, but I have never seen rubies that came from Africa. More, there are true rubies and spinel rubies. Small stones have been manufactured in chemical laboratories."

"But you, with your immense experience, can tell me if these are the real article or not."

"Not off-hand-and not this evening, but I can test them to determine their comparative hardness. The colour is magnificentthe true pigeon blood."

I tested one stone with a file; it was hard enough to justify further tests. I could not expose it to a high temperature (when the Oriental ruby turns green) and I had no dichroiscope which would reveal at once a spinel or a garnet. Nevertheless I leaped to the conclusion that these stones were rubies and from their size immensely valuable.

Then he told his story, which I accepted unhesitatingly. He had served in the Boer War with the Imperial Yeomanry. Before the Boer War he had made a precarious living as an elephant hunter. During one of his expeditions he had secured a sample stone, and had learned from a native chief where it came from. There the matter rested till the War was over. He had left the stone with his hunting kit, supposing it to be a garnet of little commercial value. One day he had shown it to a man from Johannesburg, who knew all there was to be known about diamonds. This man believed it to be a ruby, but admitted that he knew nothing about rubies. Apparently he had made a lot of money dealing in diamonds. Partridge kept to himself this man's name. Anyhow, this man "staked" Partridge, who had no private means. He agreed to pay for the expenses of an expedition to the spot where the sample stone came from. A rough agreement was signed in duplicate. The two men were to share and share alike in any profits. Partridge launched himself

into equatorial Africa; his backer returned to Johannesburg. I can only suppose that great adventures are undertaken in this very unbusiness-like spirit. To me, as a mere tradesman, it would have been wiser to submit the sample stone to an expert, who might have been found in the nearest large town. Partridge smiled when I suggested this. The nearest expert was about a thousand miles away; he had to consider time, space, climate and opportunity. . . .

What that intrepid man went through before he found the stones lying upon my table would fill a book. I listened—fascinated. He was no story-teller, but the story told itself—jerkily, irrelevantly, but always

convincingly.

to-morrow."

For the purpose of my narrative it is enough to say that he got the stones, made his way to Mombasa, and reached our establishment in Bond Street.

"And your backer?" I asked.

"He is, I suppose, in South Africa."

"You haven't communicated with him?"
"I shall do so when I get your verdict

#### II.

Early next morning I took the largest stone to the greatest expert in London. He gasped when he saw it. So far as my experiences goes experts rarely hazard an opinion till they know. But, in fairness to him, I must mention that I placed the stone in his hands and said, echoing Partridge:

"What do you make of this?"
"It's a perfectly gorgeous ruby."

Well, it wasn't. I have never been so disappointed over a matter in which personally I was only indirectly concerned. Every possible test was applied. Finally my man said irritably:

"I'm hanged if I know what it is. It's a

new gem."

I had to meet poor Partridge and tell him that.

He took it gallantly; and I was so sorry for him that I attempted to cheer him up.

"You may have found a bonanza. My man says that this is a new gem. It challenges curiosity and interest. Have some of these stones cut. Your friend who backed you might get together a syndicate. Admittedly it takes money to make money. A new gem would have to be widely advertised."

Partridge nodded.

"I will find out where my friend is, tell him what you say, and——"

"Call on me again," I concluded briskly. "Many thanks."

In a minute or two he went away. Within forty-eight hours he was back again. His friend, it appeared, was in London, but he washed his hands of the whole affair, affirming that it was folly to throw good money after bad. Partridge seemed to accept this as one of the rubs of the green.

"I shall go back to my elephants," he

observed calmly.

I attempted to argue with him, but he cut me rather short.

"My friend knows all about syndicates, Mr. Corwen, and much more than I do about diamonds. He says that we should have the trade against us. Is he right? Would you, for instance, as a retailer, undertake the setting of a new gem and push its sale as such?"

I had to admit, reluctantly, that it would be uphill work and something of a gamble.

"Exactly, I know when I'm beat. And I know too what I went through to get my stones and how many of my men died. As a souvenir, as a—a token of my gratitude to you, will you accept that stone which you showed to your expert? It may amuse you to have it cut. I—I should like you to have it."

I accepted it, feeling rather ashamed of myself. I had done so little. I wanted to help a gentleman adventurer, but he and his backer were so right.

We parted the best of friends after dining

together that night at my club.

The stone he gave me so generously was cut and polished. It looked magnificent. I put it away, wondering what I could do with Surrounded with small brilliants it would have made a superb pendant, but my wife (whom I had recently married) said very sensibly that she could not wear such a gorgeous ornament. And she knew that I couldn't afford to pay for the setting and the brilliants. Both old Mr. Rappington and his son were immensely interested, but theywith far wider experience than I had at the time—confirmed what Partridge's backer had said. More—they contended that a new gem of the authentic pigeon-blood colour might affect the market price of rubies. Nevertheless, old Mr. Rappington showed it to a member of the great family of Sidonia and asked for his opinion. He was an enthusiast on gems, and the Sidonia rubies are world-famous. He offered to buy my stone at a fancy price, but shook his head solemnly over the suggestion that he, or his brothers, might finance the marketing of a new gem.

I put the confounded thing into our safe

and forgot all about it.

I wondered vaguely what had happened to the other stones, because Herbert Sidonia had said that nothing could be done commercially till a sufficient quantity of them enough to justify the initial experiment had been collected and cut. In a fit of disgust it was quite likely that Partridge, on You must accept as a fact that a skilled setter of diamonds may be handed a small parcel of superb stones which he carries through crowded thoroughfares to some ramshackle building, running the risk of being robbed en route. I presume they take their precautions, but I should be sorry to insure gems under such conditions.

At that time, in Edwardian days, a certain lady was famous for her rubies. She collected them. She bought one or two from



"'What do you think of this?' I asked. 'It's the finest ruby of its size I ever saw.'"

his way back to his elephants, had thrown them into the sea. . . .

#### III.

I must now tread with the delicacy of Agag, because the good name of a firm of jewellers—nearly as well established as ourselves—might be imperilled. We have our own factory in London, but this is exceptional. Birmingham is the great centre of gemsetting, and much of the work is carried on in small houses in mean streets. Why this should be so howls for explanation, but there may be reasons which have escaped me.

us. She looked at nothing that was not "pigeon-blood." Old Rappington hated her, accusing her of being purse-proud, conceited and ignorant. She had achieved notoriety—which she mistook for fame—with her rubies. Another customer of ours had achieved much the same questionable publicity with a rope of black pearls. Such fools are, of course, fish to our net. They pay the piper and we dance gleefully to their tune. We should have sold her many stones and set them for her, but she was a haggler. Because she haggled and was insolent over her haggling the Rappingtons, father and

son, insisted that I should wait upon her when she came into our establishment. insolence amused me.

I shall call her Lady Clinch because she

was so prehensile over a deal.

She showed me a lot of unset rubies one afternoon, and asked to see our book of designs, which I fetched. Some of theseand not the least attractive—had been made by Mrs. Corwen.

"Have you nothing more original in your

shop?"

"These are original designs."

"I'm sure that I've seen them over and over again. This has some merit——"

If my wife could have heard her—!

"You have selected the best."

"I generally do. But you are all such robbers——! "

This was what infuriated old Rappington. I smiled at her courteously, shrugging my shoulders. French hotel-keepers have a saying: "The customer is never wrong." With them—business is business. Miladi fiddled about with her rubies, placing them upon the design, trying to fit them in. Then she had the impudence to ask if we wanted to sell the design. Nothing daunted by a very positive negative, she began her interminable haggling. I couldn't submit an estimate for such an important piece of work in five minutes. She knew that. were haggling over a number of small diamonds which would have to be supplied by us. Whilst we haggled, she jotted down my figures in a notebook. Upon a blank page she made a rough sketch of our design, a large pendant. I dared not protest, but I guessed what she was after—and I guessed right. She was deliberately stealing my wife's finest design. Finally, she swept her rubies into a chamois leather bag, shut up her notebook, and smiled at me.

"Send me your lowest estimate, Mr. Corwen, as soon as you can. I don't

promise to accept it."

Away she went with a triumphant laugh on her painted lips. I was fool enough to take particular pains over my estimate, not for love of her. It would be a feather in my cap if she accepted it, because in her dealings with my partners she had never accepted their most reasonable bids for similar work. Perhaps I took even more pains because the design had been drawn by Mrs. Corwen. Not that Lady Clinch would give her (or us) credit for that. But both the Rappingtons, although praising the design, had said that we hadn't the stones to do it justice—which was perfectly true. We had paid, in short, for something which only the few could possibly want.

I sent her our estimate. She hadn't the civility to acknowledge receipt of it. When I told old Mr. Rappington he expressed a far from pious wish concerning the lady's future.

It was at a city dinner given by the Goldsmiths' Company that Lady Clinch's unhonoured name cropped up. I was talking to—I had better say Smith, of Smith and Smith, and sharing with him a decanter of '68 port, a noble wine, full of vinosity and breed. Beneath its mellowing influence Smith and I became autobiographical. I mean we "bucked" about ourselves. Excusable in two youngish men. Presently Smith said:

"I should like to show you, Corwen, a pendant we have just made for Lady Clinch-

My wife may deny me a sense of humour, but she can't accuse me of not enjoying a joke against myself. Was it the wine, the good company, or the excellent dinner that aroused a Puck-like spirit in me?

"A pendant for Lady Clinch?" I repeated. "Something absolutely superb. She supplied the rubies, we did the rest."

"You can describe it?"

"Describe it? It's indescribable. You must see it. Drop in to-morrow."

"Who designed it?"

"Are you pulling my leg? We did, of course."

The menu card was just in front of me, and I always carry a pencil. I invited Smith to sip his wine and look the other way, as I sketched roughly the design that Lady Clinch had stolen.

"Is your design anything like this?" Smith choked. He was purple in the face when he gasped out:

"This is spooky. Are you a mindreader? Have you just peered into a

crystal ball?"

"Cool yourself. Sometimes a customer submits a rough design to us. We lick it into shape. And then it is justifiable to claim the design as ours."

"Right. I—twig. Lady Clinch brought us a very rough design; and we did lick it into shape. I've got it. She showed you that design, eh? And you refused to be jewed down by the old skinflint."

"She stole that design, Smith."

"My word! But this is serious."

" It is."

"We copyright our designs. Do you?"

"Some—not all. The more elaborate designs for big pieces, some of them drawn by Mrs. Corwen, are not copyrighted."

"Mrs. Corwen designed that

sketch?"

"She did. We shall take no action. Don't let this spoil the port. I will call and see the pendant. Lady Clinch refused our estimate. To the Tiber with her!"

V.

I saw the pendant next day, just before closing time. Perhaps I shall be pardoned if I venture to observe that the work—good as it was-would have been finer and more distinctive had it been done by us. I made certain that it had been done in Birmingham. Being a setter of gems myself I was concerned at the moment with the craftsmanship rather than with the rubies. But I heard Smith say:

"She has the goods, what? blood stones all of 'em." Pigeon-

I looked at them and blinked.

"Has Lady Clinch seen this pendant?"

"Not yet; she's in Paris. Anything wrong ? "

I hesitated.

"We're tiled in, old man. You look rather queer."

"Are you perfectly certain that these stones are rubies?"

"What else could they be?"

I glanced at my watch. I had barely time to get to Bond Street.

"I must show you something, Smith. Can you wait here for twenty minutes?"

"Of course."

I jumped into a taxi without further talk, and was back again in just seventeen minutes. Smart going. I took from my waistcoat pocket Partridge's stone and laid it upon a sheet of white note-paper.

"What do you think of this?" I asked.

Smith replied solemnly:

"It's the finest ruby of its size I ever saw."

"You're not the first person to say that. It isn't a ruby. And, strictly between ourselves, I believe that the stones in your pendant came from the same place that this did. Have you a dichroiscope?"

"Have I a-what?"

It pleased me to enlighten pardonable ignorance. I explained that a dichroiscope had revealed my stone as a new gem.

Smith, of course, knew my expert and we rang him up there and hen. He was having his tea, but promised to join us immediately afterwards. Meanwhile Smith allowed me to remove one of the stones from its setting; and we had barely done this, a delicate job, when our man arrived. These wonderful fellows never forget anything connected with their own expertise. He took the stone which I had removed from its setting and the stone given to me by Partridge. Then he examined carefully (without using a lens) the other stones in the pendant.

"You gentlemen see nothing remarkable

about these stones?"

"Remarkable," sputtered Smith. thought them world-beaters."

"So they would be, if they were rubies."

"You say they are not rubies before you have even tested them?"

"I say this; and I might have said it to Mr. Corwen had he brought me more than one stone. There is not a stone in that pendant which is not perfect in colour."

" Well—— ? "

"Well, you must both know better than I do that the very finest rubies vary in colour. You saw the other stones, Mr. Corwen. Did they vary at all in colour?"

It was humiliating to have to admit that I had noticed no variation in colour, and then had failed to draw a very obvious inference. The dichroiscope settled the matter (and poor Smith) in five minutes. It is true that we had tested only one stone, but that sufficed—at any rate for the present.

As soon as we were alone Smith explained why he was so terribly upset. He had given his undivided attention to these stones, but, knowing Lady Clinch to be a collector of rubies and presumably almost an expert, he had accepted them as rubies without attempting to test them. He pathetically:

"I shall go to Birmingham to-morrow. Somehow, somewhen, these stones were substituted for the real rubies. She'll spot the difference as soon as she sees the pendant. My father, Corwen, will go off the deep end over this. These confounded stones passed from me—I'll swear nobody robbed me—to our head clerk in Birmingham. He can tell me who else has handled them. The most trusted man in our service set them. Shall I tell the governor to-night?"

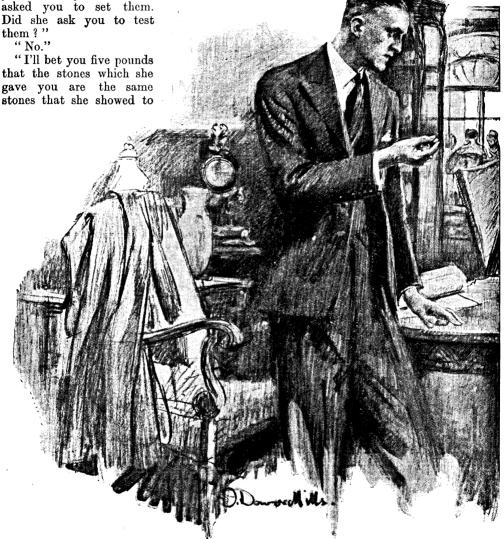
"Let him have a night's rest. Look here, Smith, I'm in this—and I mean to stay in. You have forgotten something—and so had We were badly rattled, and it's difficult to link up two things at the same time. I did notice that Partridge's uncut stones seemed to be all alike in colour. Now-sit tight, I can swear in a court of law if necessary that Lady Clinch's cut stones were perfectly matched in colour. Again, I ought to have drawn an inference—and didn't. Let's try to be calm. Lady Clinch handed you so many stones and

"I'll bet you five pounds that the stones which she gave you are the same

nothing crooked, not one trivial incident that might arouse suspicion, submit the pendant to Lady Clinch and see if she accepts it."

"And-if she does?"

"If she does, if she is satisfied that the stones she gave to you have been set in this



"'This, Madam, is not a ruby."

me and the same stones that are in her pendant."

" Corwen---!"

"I couldn't swear to that; nobody could. Go to Birmingham—find out what you can quietly-not a word to your father yet-and if you are satisfied that there has been pendant, why then you can break it to her that her stones are not rubies. It is quite possible she knows that. If she goes off the deep end, and asserts that they are rubies, you might, I think, call me in to give my opinion. I shall give it with pleasure."

"You want to get your knife into her."

I should like her to say so before you. It

might come in handy afterwards. She is

"She stole Mrs. Corwen's design. She may—I say she may—be contemplating another criminal offence."



"By Mercury, Smith. He was the god of thieves."

"I shall do what you advise, Corwen. But I have just had a brain-wave. If I tackle Lady Clinch, I should like a witness present. If she accepts the stones as hers VI.

When I met Lady Clinch on Saturday I perceived at a glance that her plumage was ruffled. And what plumage——! It was a warm day in September, but she was draped

in Russian sables from head to foot. Before meeting her, Smith's face was reassuring. It was as certain as anything can be in this very uncertain world that the stones he took over from her ladyship had been set in her pendant.

As soon as she saw me, she became vituperative, which was what I expected and wanted. She sat at a table, and the pendant scintillated in its open case lined with white satin. Obviously no question had been raised about that other than Smith's accusation that she had pilfered a design belonging to us.

"What is this I hear?" she demanded shrilly. "Do you dare to accuse me of

taking one of your designs?"

I opened our book of designs and laid it on the table beside the pendant. I made no remark. It is common humanity to let an angry woman talk herself out. I admit that it takes time to do it. Smith, a younger man, was not so considerate.

"The two designs, my lady, are almost

identical," he said blandly.

"Rubbish!"

"Here is the rough sketch which you submitted to me. Mr. Corwen tells me that you made it in his presence with that book of designs open before you."

"I don't remember anything of the sort."
"But he does. It is rather awkward for

us. These designs are copyrighted. In a court of law Messrs. Rappington would, I think, be awarded damages."

"A farthing, possibly. Does Mr. Rappington claim damages?"

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"He doesn't," said I.

"Then why this absurd fuss? I make sketches of any design that happens to please me. I may have done so in this case. I am certainly not ashamed of what I have done. I should have given this order to Mr. Corwen, if—if he had been less grasping."

Grasping----!

I made no protest. My turn was coming. She picked up the pendant, saying maliciously:

"Even Mr. Corwen will admit, I suppose, that the work couldn't have been better

done."

"It has been admirably done. I told your ladyship when you showed me those stones that it would be a privilege to set them for you. I have never seen such stones before."

Her tone softened; she bestowed upon me a frosty smile. She knew that she had wriggled out of a tight place.

"I think they are unique," she said.

"They are so unique," I assured her, "that I venture to say that I should have identified them again although I only saw them once."

"Of course you would. I should know them anywhere. They are perfectly matched in colour. There is no pendant like this in the world—and I know."

Oh, the conceit of the woman——! And, nearly invariably, conceit peacocks

hand in hand with ignorance.

"You went to a famous firm, my lady. Had you gone, for instance, to a less responsible firm, inferior stones might have been substituted."

"Do you really think, Mr. Corwen, that I should not have found that out at

once ? "

"I am quite sure that your ladyship, as you say, would identify your own stones. Is it indiscreet to ask where you found them?"

"Why do you ask?"

I produced Partridge's stone, larger and finer than any in the pendant.

"Gracious! Where did you get that?"

She snapped it up greedily.

"It was given to me, my lady."

"Given! To you! I—I can't believe

"As you please."

"Is it for sale?"

" No."

There was a pregnant pause. Honestly, I think I could have sold that unknown gem at my own price. A little learning is indeed a dangerous thing. She had begun to collect rubies, paying high prices, paying, too, for the best expert advice, and then, being a sad "pincher," had trusted her own judgment.

"I have no ruby like this," she muttered,

still clutching it.

"Pardon me—you have. These stones in this pendant came, I'm almost sure, from the same mine."

"But yours is bigger."

"And exactly the same colour—pigeonblood. I don't ask you, my lady, to tell me where, or from whom, you bought your stones, but did you collect them here and there or did you buy them in one parcel?"

"I bought them—and a rare bargain, too—from a well-known dealer, Vandarvell, of

Hatton Garden."

Smith looked at me; I looked at Smith. We knew Vandarvell. Was it possible that he had been deceived?

"You have dealt with him before?" I asked.

"No; but I knew all about him. He wrote from his office telling me that he had these rubies; he called on me two hours after I received his letter. I saw the stones; I bought them."

"Without submitting them to an expert?"

"Expert? I'm something of an expert on rubies. So is Vandarvell. He's a responsible dealer; he wouldn't dare to sell me any stone that wasn't of the finest quality."

I held up my stone, which she had relin-

quished most unwillingly.

"This, Madam, is not a ruby."

"You mean it is paste?"

"It is an unknown gem, pronounced to be such by the most famous lapidary in London. He examined one of your stones which was taken from its setting and replaced afterwards. He pronounces that to be the same as my stone. The other stones matching it so exactly are presumably the same, the more so if you bought them from one dealer."

I thought she was going to have an apoplectic fit. Her face grew purple; her fingers twitched. I felt positively sorry for her till she said savagely:

"I bought those stones from Mr. Vandar-

vell. He must take them back."

I said soothingly:

"He will."

"I have been outrageously robbed. All

tradesmen are robbers—all.'

"Mr. Vandarvell is not a robber. Your car is outside. I suggest in the interests of all concerned that we go to Hatton Garden immediately. It is Saturday; we have just time. Before we start Mr. Smith will ring up Mr. Vandarvell and find out if he is in his office."

He was.

#### VII.

On our way to Hatton Garden, nobody spoke; so I had leisure to attempt the solution of a difficult problem. Dealers in precious stones, whether honest or dishonest, do not sell doubtful stones to recognised collectors or retailers. Vandarvell, therefore, must have believed that he was selling real rubies to Lady Clinch. No other hypothesis was tenable.

Poor Lady Clinch——! This was a day of terrible surprises for her. She marched

into Vandarvell's office looking like Boadicea before she encountered the Romans. Old Vandarvell, looking like a Venetian doge with his silvery hair and pointed beard, gazed apostolically at her inflamed countenance. She gazed at him and fell back into a chair.

"You are not Mr. Ephraim Vandarvell,"

she stuttered.

"Indeed I am, Madam."

"B-but w-where is the Ephraim Vandarvell, a much y-younger m-man, who sold me my rubies?"

"I cannot tell you. I do not deal in

rubies. I deal in diamonds."

We took her back to her hotel—a wreck.

But reputation is a great asset. We held our tongues. Till she died, not so long ago, Lady Clinch wore that pendant, and nobody questioned the authenticity of the stones in it. She was honest enough to declare in her will that they were not rubies. So—peace be with her!

Truth emerged from her well unexpectedly. Partridge, just before the Great War, walked into our establishment and said in

his odd wav:

"Don't I owe you a dinner? May I pay

my debt to-night?"

During dinner, I got as near to the facts as I shall ever get. Partridge had handed over the uncut stones to his backer, whose name I shall never know. According to Partridge he turned out a wrong 'un. Partridge had suspected him of being an I.D.B. (illicit diamond buyer). South Africa became too hot for him. He must have had Partridge's stones cut. He knew Vandarvell. He had heard of Lady Clinch. Who hadn't? At the time when her ladyship bought the stones, this man, at the end of his financial tether, was in Vandarvell's office. He took nothing from him except a few sheets of office note-paper. Knowing that Vandarvell didn't deal in rubies, he guessed quite rightly that Lady Clinch had never met him. He showed her his stones, asked a price ridiculously beneath the value of real rubies; and cupidity, conceit and ignorance fell a victim to a plausible tale. Partridge believed that the man was dead.

"They were pigeon-blood, weren't they?"

he said to me in conclusion.

"Perhaps," said I, "that explains why a pigeon wanted them."

# • THE WOMAN • WITH THE SCARF

## By ROSITA FORBES

#### ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED SINDALL

 ${f T}$  was August and I had been delayed in Vienna, chiefly by laziness, while my husband visited neighbouring Commissions and inspected armies pruned by the scissors of Versailles. At first, I wandered in search of new cafés, all equally deserted, with the tourist's idea that one is not getting the most out of a foreign town unless one feeds in a different place each night. Ignorantly, I strayed into the long room of Otto Schwartz, with the antlers and the hunting pictures set on panelled walls, and the sombre air of discretion, relic of a past wherein the bourgeoisie, who now eat and drink with guttural satisfaction, played no part. Fat fathers and mothers of families, a king's messenger, a secretary or two from the embassies, and a few-very fewtravellers from Central Europe were ranged on the hard leather seats, reading papers or gazing blankly into space through diplomatic eye-glasses.

Alone, under a candle bracket, sat a woman who had no newspaper and no eye-glass. Her black hair was cut like a man's, her face was so dark that it had left behind the dusk of olives and caught the burned swarthiness of the islanders who live between reef and shore.

Her mouth was red and so was the scarf twisted round her neck, but the rest of her was sombre as Otto Schwartz' regrets. During the gulf between each course, which is part of the restaurant's atmosphere, I stared across at this unconscious diner. Utterly detached, her deep, heavy-lidded eyes saw nothing, cared for nothing. Unblinking above the smoke of her cigarettes, which she lit neatly one from another and smoked through a man's amber holder, she looked through life and found it trivial.

"Who is the lady with the red scarf?" I asked my waiter.

"She who like a man dresses? Me, I do

not know, but she a good client is. Every night she here comes and the *patron*, he himself to her attends," shrugged the man with a flow of inverted English.

After that I always dined at Schwartz'. Fascinated, I used to engage the table opposite the woman of the scarf, hoping perhaps that she would notice me, but she never did. Her dinner must have been ordered in advance, for, as soon as she sat down, moving quietly, inconspicuously, an apéritif was placed before her. The head waiter arrived with the fish and, into its dissection, managed to infuse the awe of a high priest at the sacrifice. She never looked at him. I got the idea that her eyes were too tired to look at anyone. She ate leisurely and lingered over her flask of golden Tokay, luxuriating in it, laying aside for the moment her eternal cigarettes. Then she would be off, her assurance proof against the stares which followed her smoking-jacket. Once I invited a successful woman decorator to dine with me at Schwartz'. Armoured with bracelets and decision, she attempted to expedite our meal, failed, glanced round in search of interest and concentrated on our vis-à-vis.

"That woman need never be frightened of getting old," she remarked after an appraisal of every feature.

Î started. I had not thought of my incognita as old or young—mature certainly, but——

"Perhaps she is old already," I suggested.
"Her eyes are . ." But I found I couldn't describe them.

"If I were a man," said my companion, eating bread, "I should like to be her lover. For a short time it would be a marvellous experience."

A few days later as I walked along the Opera-Strasse wondering if I dared pass the shop where you buy Austrian enamels,

fascinating intriguing boxes and bottles and vanity-cases at prices which soar with the exchange, I was hailed by a young-old man whom I loved.

"Whither come you? Whither go you?" he asked, when we had exhausted our expressions of pleasure.

"You've forgotten your eye-glass?" I

retorted.

"After forty, even a Foreign Office eye can be sufficiently non-committal, unglazed!" he mocked.

"It is not registering the requisite degree

of abstraction at the moment.

"Of course not, for you are going to dine with me to-night," he said.

"At Otto Schwartz'," we added in

chorus.

One does not usually dress for the panelled room hung with the trophies of forgotten hunts, but I had a quite new Patou that was particularly engaging—black chiffon, in swirls which hung together by magic. I thought its mock discretion would amuse a man known to three continents as "the stormy petrel." It did.

We sat in a corner and Paul Gascoigne laughed at me and loved me a little with his eyes and not at all with his speech. We talked of our last meeting—in Pekin—of treaties and trade commissions and strikes.

"Have you ever had a secret, Paul?"

I asked.
"Never. My past
is as blameless as an
undertaker's weddingcake!"
"What a good

I'm always

dreadfully afraid that your Service may some day have a secret and then it would die of indigestion."

"Would anyone miss it?"

We both laughed and then the woman of the scarf came in and walked up the room, her face blank, her eyes so deep that they must have been burning holes in her brain. My companion glanced after her. There was a suspicion of a frown between his brows.

"Who is she?" I asked. "Do you know her?"



" 'She reminds me of someone; at least, I think she does."

"Nobody knows her. She is 'de passage' —they say from Hungary. But she reminds me of someone; at least, I think she does."

"Tell me the story. I am sure there is a story," I urged.

"I've never told it to anyone."

"So, you have a secret." But Paul Gascoigne, Bart., with half the letters of the alphabet after his name, only remarked that the Sôle Dieppois could not have been better at Château Basque. I did not know where Château Basque was, but I agreed fervently and hoped that mauresque powder was proof against the sudden heat in my cheeks.

We talked of Arabia. It was while I was giving what I felt sure was a brilliant and comprehensive précis of its politics that I realised the woman of the scarf was watching us. I felt it at once.

"This pigeon is too perfectly cooked to be a bird at all—it's just a dream in a casserole," said my host, but I hadn't the least idea what he meant. Reluctantly, I had met the eyes of the woman who they said was Hungarian. They held me, weighed me, discarded me and passed on to my neighbour. I saw the birth of expression in a mask, that had beauty somewhere deep below it. My silence made Paul look up.

For a long time the well-known man and the unknown woman stared at each other. Then the head waiter obscured whatever vision they were sharing. With bent back and that touch of obsequious aloofness which maîtres d'hôtel infuse into their manner towards the very great, he operated on a grouse. Paul turned back to me and sighed.

"I believe I have a secret," he said.

I did not interrupt. His thoughts were obviously flowing backwards, as the thoughts of past middle age must do.

"But I don't know what it is," he added abruptly.

We gestured away the ice, and coffee came unexpectedly quickly.

"I am going to tell you the story after all."
Paul lit a cigarette with meticulous care.



He forgot to give me a match, after a mechanical gesture had proffered his case.

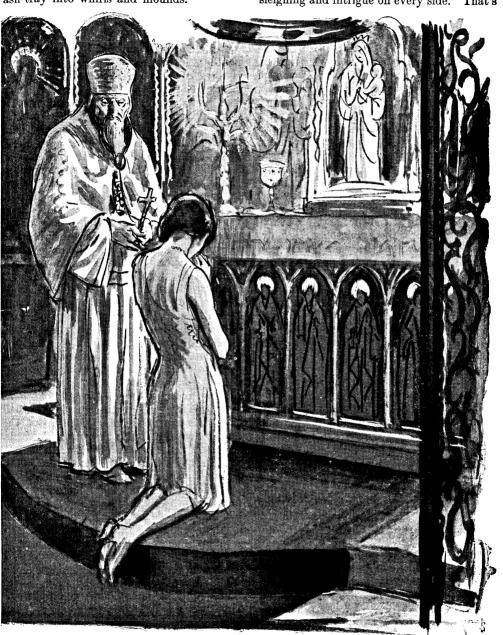
"We are both of us wanderers," he began.
"I expect you have seen some queer things, even queerer than the ones you write about."

There was the flash of a smile, but it did not go beyond the man's lips.

"Nothing, I think, can have been as . . . queer . . . as what I'm going to tell you."

He hesitated, smeared the flakes in the ash-tray into whirls and mounds.

learn Russian, for Petersburg was the goal of every youth with a sense of adventure—plots, Czars, assassins, a frozen sea, midnight sleighing and intrigue on every side. That's



"On the steps of the high altar knelt Olga. Her head was bowed forward."

"I suppose I've been over most of the world during the last thirty years, but I began in Poland. I was twenty-two and studying for the service. Diplomacy then seemed very grand to me. I wanted to

how I saw it then. The Potockskis were friends of my father. They invited me to Warsaw. I remember I was rather sick at not going straight to the city on the Neva—the Neva, what memories it brings back!

All you young people have missed something in life—Imperial Russia. There'll never be anything quite like that again. Well, I settled down in Warsaw. The palace was about three times the size of Norfolk House, shabby in bits, but very splendid—the two go together sometimes. Countess Potockska was a Russian. She took no part in the politics which added a sauce to entertaining, or made life a volcano on the verge of eruption, according to your temperament, but she introduced me to all the factions, Czarist, Germanic, Nationalist. It was a game with most of them— the Slavs take to intrigue like a cat to cream. Forbidden fruit is all they care about and the prospective penalty adds attraction to the theft. At that time, you remember, the country was divided between Russia, Germany and Austria, and the Nationalists had to work in the dark-dusk, shall we say, for everyone knew there was something brewing. Beyond and behind the young men who talked too much, there was a powerful combination backed by international financiers. Russia sent a mission to Warsaw, nominally to inquire into trade, really to discover the names of her new enemies. The mission lodged with Count Krascheiski, whose boyhood had been spent in the corps de pages at the Court of Petersburg. Of his twin daughters, one was engaged to a Pole, a suspected Nationalist, and the other—well, the other is the heroine of my story."

The restaurant was beginning to empty. During the pause I watched a mother and two daughters, all dressed like widows, waddle out of the door, embarrassed by avoirdupois and unlimited crêpe. When the pause threatened to become prolonged, I prompted, "Tell me about her."

"It's very hard," said Paul in a different and suddenly everyday voice, "because the story has no end—and, in any case, it's

incredible."

His cigarette was beheaded viciously.

"We were a little in love with each other. With me, perhaps, it was the atmosphere. Sudden love and sudden death were rife in Warsaw where one day saw a noble glittering with orders at the Governor's reception, and the next, half clothed, on the way to Siberia. Olga was her name and she was terribly, pathetically, in earnest. An uncle of hers had been massacred by Cossacks of the Guard. They buried him in the ground up to his neck, put a glass of water a foot out of his reach and left him to die. The flies finished him. His

widow made a mid-winter pilgrimage to Petersburg to intercede for her son and was struck with snow-blindness on the way. Olga used to tell me such stories and exclaim, 'You can murder a Pole or ten thousand Poles, but you can't murder Poland.'

"She was nineteen and dark as a black panther. I remember her in white against the red walls of the Potockski palacecrimson Genoese velvet, Heaven knows how many hundred years old-slim and pale and flashing, curiously uneasy. There was a ball that night, the gaver for the absence of the Russian mission. The men wore furred velvet cloaks, bespattered with decorations, and the women were literally wrapped in jewels. You don't see such stones to-day. I danced with Olga, but she was distrait. I think, that night, I really loved her—enfin, I have never married! When she disappeared before supper, I remember hunting the rooms like a terrier. There were so many of them-the white saloon paved with marble, the oak gallery where mediæval portraits looked down from carved garlands of fruit, the great gold drawing-rooms where they danced. In the end I found myself in deserted suites, where the silk was frayed on the walls and dust powdered the tapestry. On an impulse I went out into the garden, filmed with the first snow. The Krascheiski palace loomed, square and grimed, across leafless trees. There was a gate between the two domains—on summer nights I had crept through it to meet Olga. But the door in the wing would be shut, I told myself, and there the adventure would end. It was not shut and I went, shuffling and uncertain, down a long corridor. Of course, I was mad. If I were discovered, Heaven knows what would happen—a duel at least—but I wanted to see Olga. I had to. In a dim, green room, uncurtained so that the moon reached gibbering fingers across the floor, I became conscious of a machine. Breathless, listened to the drumming of hammers on an anvil. It was some seconds before I realised it was my own heart. Immediately, I knew there was more in the matter than seeing You are very keen on the subconscious nowadays, aren't you? I gave no name to my instinct, but I hurried through one shutterless room after another, up the white, branching staircase and into the series of saloons which, I knew, led to the chapel. I must have moved silently, though the drumming in my ears would have stifled every outside sound, and, at last, a light

streaked under the door of the chapel anteroom. A slight sound came from within, but I recognised no voices. The light on the floor made everything else blacker and, as I stood there, I was afraid." Paul looked at me for the first time. "In a blue funk. my dear, and there was no reason for itas yet."

He paused as if to garner his impressions and, when he continued his narrative, it was in the simplest words. I felt he was putting the thing as baldly as possible, in order to make credible the incredible.

"When I opened the door, I knew what I was going to see. I'd been in that room before. It was octagonal and in each wall was set a Gobelin tapestry, with a red marble seat below it. The light came from sconces on either side of curtained alcoves. I remember the candles flared in the sudden draught and I thought I was dreaming. There were some men grouped in a corner, but my attention was arrested by the open gates of the chapel. They were golden gates, jewel studded, and the high altar beyond them was ablaze. On the steps knelt Olga. She was in her white ball-dress, with pearls slung across the bodice. The sweep of her hair seemed, as usual, too heavy for her neck. Her head was bowed forward. Then I saw she was making confession to a priest—a fantastic, sumptuous figure in cope and mitre, his breastplate of precious stones, his ring, his cross, all glittering distinctly and separately. Behind the girl stood Count Krascheiski in his Russian uniform. His face might have been a death-mask, and, in his right hand, he held a dagger."

"Go on "— I breathed. "Go on! How

can you stop now."

"That's all I know, really," said Paul, and he repeated it, stupidly, for he was back in the octagonal room with the candles making pools of wax before the curtains.

"What did you do? What happened?" "The Russians who were near the door seized me. I should have been dragged away at once, but Krascheiski stopped them.

"'You have interrupted a family affair," he said in a dead voice. 'Your word of

honour not to speak of it.'

"The Russians protested, but the Count silenced them.

"'Is my sacrifice not great enough?' he asked, and all the while Olga knelt on the floor, unheeding, immobile.

"You ask what I did. I have no exact recollection. I struggled. I stormed. suppose I pleaded.

"' We waste time 'muttered the Russians, and Krascheiski nodded. 'My daughter was unfortunate enough to discover a thing which must be secret. It is for Poland she dies.'

"The words galvanised the passionless, remote figure at the feet of the priest. The old Olga, undaunted, undefeatable, looked up

"'Yes, it is for Poland,' she said."

"And the end, what was the end?" I couldn't bear to wait for the slow words measuring their meaning, but I doubt if Paul heard me.

"I was dragged from the room, literally thrown out of the palace. Next day the Countess Olga Krascheiski was reported ill. Three days later her death was announced. Victim of an epidemic which was raging in the Jewish quarters, where she had visited a protégée, she was buried with all the pomp due to her name."

"And you?" I demanded.

"What could I do? Repeat a story which would have been received as a drunken nightmare, a story I could hardly believe myself? No! I was left with Olga's assurance, 'It is for Poland,' and the conviction that her words had meant something diametrically different from her father's."

Silence drifted round us like mist. woman of the scarf had left the room. went out of her way to pass our table and I wondered if she had heard familiar names.

A waiter placed the bill, discreetly folded, by the coffee-tray. The restaurant was deserted except for three Austrian officers drinking Tokay in the farthest corner.

"What is the explanation?" I asked at last. "I would have given ten years of my life

to know it," said Paul.

"D'you mean you know nothing? You must have heard rumours, guessed at the truth—you couldn't let it rest! What happened to the sister?"

"She disappeared. Shock, they saidthe girls were twins and inseparable. It was supposed she went to an aunt in the country. Perhaps she did, but later, when her fiancé had been shot in a duel, she ran away. I imagine she joined the Nationalists and lived in exile, possibly in hiding. I heard she was with the Polish legionaries during the war."

"Well, what is your own explanation?"

"I have none . . . really. I imagine a meeting of the Russians in the Council Chamber. Olga once told me there was a secret hiding-hole behind a figure in armour. Perhaps she slipped away from the ball, through the gardens, up the hidden stairs in time to reach what can have been little more than a cupboard. She heard the Czarist plans and knew that, if she could convey a warning, her friends and the man her sister loved could escape."

"How was she discovered?"

"The floor of the hiding-hole was unsafe. Some sound must have frightened them all. Perhaps the Czarists rushed out and trapped her on the stairs before she could escape."

"But why kill her?" I protested. "Even prison would have been better than such a

death!"

"I wonder! The horrors of a Siberian gaol for a young girl—beautiful—patrician—alone—no, I think a father might justifiably choose her death."

"So you explain it all?" I ventured.

"No. The greater mystery remains unsolved."

I waited patiently and, while the minutes fled, I realised that my friend was old.

"Olga was more than happy," he said at last, "when, with death waiting, she looked up at me. She was triumphant!"

"I don't understand." Slowly, Paul elucidated.

"The whole thing was so quick—yes, I heard a few details years later, from an old servant. My reconstruction must be near the truth—she had no time to pass on whatever she had learned. Yet, no arrests were made. The Nationalists escaped. They carried on their organisation from other countries. United Poland is the vindication of their labours. In fact they were warned in time. But how—in God's name how?"

Another pause. The waiter hovered ex-

pectantly.

"Olga knew they were safe, knew her death would insure their safety. Fanatical, fatalistic, she died triumphantly because she had saved Poland. Why?"

We stared at each other, unanswering.

A year later I jumped into the last carriage of the Orient Express, as the engine moved out of the Gare de Lyon. A frenzied porter threw my rug and suit-case after me. With a sigh of relief, I turned to inspect the compartment and my travelling companions. There was only one—a still figure in a black smoking-jacket, her scarf as scarlet as her lips and a man's felt hat pulled over her eyes. My heart missed a beat.

First stop Dijon—of course I would speak to her, I told myself, but I sat in the opposite corner and turned the pages of a novel with unnecessary persistence. Grand Dieu! Dijon already! Surely she wouldn't get out. Hot and desperate, I blocked the doorway. If anyone entered the compartment it would be over my dead body. Rattle of coupling chains and the express gathering way again! I must make the most of the reprieve, but how could one address anything so still, so aloof? I don't think she moved between Dijon and Maçon. As the train jerked over suburban points, I opened my lips-they were dry. No, I must think first what I would say. Maçon—Lyons, and always that profile, indifferent, immobile, against a flying country-side. The dinner call! Could I stumble over her feet, apologise, and then, "Tell me, why was your sister happy when they murdered her!" Imbecile! Of course I could never speak to her. I knew it as I left the compartment.

It was dark when we reached Avignon—was it Avignon or some other walled city with towers etched against the night? She rose as the train stopped, took a scarlet case from the rack and opened the door. I had lost my chance. The breath stuck in my throat.

With her foot on the step she turned, leant down to me. For a second I saw straight into her eyes.

"Tell Paul that it was I, not my sister, who was in the secret room," she said.

I had an impression of a smile as the door swung wide.





"He saw this figure . . . draw up to her chin, as if for purposes of concealment, the large rug which lay there,"

# THE FUGITIVE

# By FRANK SWINNERTON

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

⊚

'TT'S a rheumy world!" mused Jim idly. He sounded his horn, but all the vehicles in front remained perfectly "A rheumy world!" said Jim again. "Crowded. It isn't so much a world as a dog-shop." He looked in the reflector and saw that the taxi-driver immediately behind him was lighting a cigarette, as if he were settling comfortably and cynically in this spot for the rest of the afternoon. It was a broiling hot day in Piccadilly, and somewhere far ahead—miles away, probably—a policeman's hand stretched before the bonnet of a steaming red omnibus, holding up the Holding up—and this was the worst of all—Jim's glorious new Paradise Super Saloon, which he had just collected from the makers' show-rooms, and upon which he was planning to make a little dash that afternoon to Oxford and back.

The car was a beauty, responsive as the finest-tempered horse, a greyhound, an ideal, a gem. Jim was longing to put her through her paces. He wanted to feel power gathering under his foot's pressure, wanted to see the hedges fly grittily past, and the little ribbon of the speedometer creeping up, up, up, until . . . Instead, upon this sweltering afternoon, he was checked almost directly outside the principal entrance of the Grand Metropolitan Hotel in Piccadilly, and about him, as if cast up by a receding tide, as old bottles, corks, and pieces of wood are left upon a popular seashore, were the most decrepit, the most derelict, the most antediluvian taxicabs in London. They crept and crawled and nosed about him, and at last lay motionless, rattling. Jim was shocked. All his splendid excitements of possession were smudged. The effusively bowing men who had waved him farewell

from the emporium of Paradise Saloons two or three blocks back were gone. Instead, hemmed in by the rag, tag and bobtail of the universe, Jim sat miserably at his own luxurious steering-wheel. The sun burned, the tar-laden air stifled. Heavens! her new paint, a rich deep crimson, pride of Jim's heart, would get blistered in this heat! Her brilliant mudguards would be scratched by these edging, rattling taxicabs! He was in a fever, unconsciously jerking his shoulders and clenching his teeth in rage.

What was that? A movement! The worn old taxi in front of him wheezed a yard farther onward. It stopped. Jim silently eased up to within a couple of inches of the taxi's tail and lay back in his seat, bored to death. He could see the tightly-wedged vehicles before and behind. Upon his left, great masses of people struggled along the sidewalk, staring ahead of them with maniacal intentness, and disappeared, to be instantly succeeded by other masses, equally intent, equally frenzied. Enviable pedes-They could move. Not so the trians! wretched vehicles that nosed about Jim. He was now, owing to that last yard, directly abreast of the entrance to the Grand Metropolitan Hotel. He could see the colossal blue-coated and gold-braided figure of the door-keeper standing well in the shadow of the red and white striped awning. Tremendous heat. Altogether exceptional and infernal heat. A quivering of hot air rose from the surface of the roadway. was a fevered trembling and tinkling and rattling from the stationary omnibuses. Roar, roar, roar, rattle. . . .

Vaguely, Jim allowed his eye to stray to the perforated indiarubber mat which lay before the entrance of the Grand Metropolitan Hotel. It ran across the sidewalk from the hotel entrance to the kerb, the full length and width of the striped awning above. words GRAND METROPOLITAN HOTEL appeared to have been inserted in the mat by means of brass or copper They rose, glowing, from amid a thousand passing feet. Fascinating to watch the letters appear and disappear. And as Jim glanced at this rubber mat with the metal studs, he saw an extraordinarily small, half-blind, stupid, and package-laden middleaged woman come peering and almost waltzing along the sidewalk. She was talking to herself eccentrically. He saw her look to the right and the left, bump into another woman, who had just amazedly struck with her scarlet parasol the frame of the awning

and who was consequently recoiling, catch her foot in the indiarubber mat and fall headlong. He saw the door-keeper of the Grand Metropolitan Hotel dart forward to raise the fallen figure, saw a hundred people grab at the scattered parcels in order to restore them to the small, half-blind old woman, saw the other woman with the scarlet parasol hurry away. And then, when all was confusion, Jim was conscious of a light figure—a young, feminine figure running swiftly from the hotel, taking half a dozen strides, seizing the handle of the second door of his own magnificent Paradise Super Saloon and turning it. He saw this figure wrench open the door, jump into the car and, throwing herself back into the softness of the rear seat, draw up to her chin, as if for purposes of concealment, the large rug which lay there.

While Jim's eyebrows were still in the act of rising in amazement, another figure came running at full tilt from the entrance of the Grand Metropolitan Hotel—the figure of a man in a top-hat and grey morning suit, with a monocle in his eye and an umbrella in his hand. This figure was running wildly, one pale hand clutching at the immaculate top-hat, while the monocled eye looked excitedly in every direction but that which lay directly before it; with the result that the runner stumbled over a man who had just stooped to grasp the old woman's sixteenth parcel, bumped into another stooping sportsman who had just been over-reached by the first stooper, slipped, and was lost to sight in the general mêlée.

At precisely this moment the traffic in front of the Paradise Super Saloon began to move. Instinctively, Jim released the clutch and tenderly caressed the accelerator. His great car purred forward, carried irresistibly in the stream of traffic, bearing the unknown passenger, and leaving behind that confused and agitated group in front of the entrance to the Grand Metropolitan Hotel. Slowly, stealthily, like a panther, the Paradise Super Saloon stole in the wake of all the antediluvian taxicabs, its engine noiseless, its motion exquisitely calm. Behind, from the midst of the crowd, now once again erect, the grey morning-suited stranger, whose face was as crimson as the shining paint upon Jim's car, gazed darkly and passionately and sightlessly upon the world.

II.

When one is driving in dense traffic, particularly when the car is a new one and a Para-

dise Super Saloon, one cannot spare the time and attention to ask a number of questions of a perfectly strange girl who has invaded one's privacy. Nay, it is even difficult to compose one's mind sufficiently to think of a really effective opening. Jim, who was a dear good soul, but not especially witty, except at about four o'clock in the morning, or when quite alone, could not call to mind any snappy, pithy remark which might express his sense of the stranger's coolness, and indeed impudence, in taking possession of his car. He tried hard for some minutes to recall some of the more appropriate epigrams at which he had lately laughed in the theatre. In vain. At last he shook his

"No good," he said, in silence. should only snort."

It was too true, and Jim showed his superb natural wisdom by recognising the truth. He would indeed have snorted. So instead of speaking, Jim drove delicately through the traffic with a master hand, on past the policeman, round into Piccadilly Circus; and as he did this he tried desperately to catch in his wind-screen a reflected glimpse of the interloper. That also was useless. There were altogether too many reflections in his wind-screen—and in his head also. Jim's fingers stole in perplexity to his moustache. Now Jim's moustache was by no means imposing. It was small and fierce, by intention; but the ferocity was less evident to observers than the smallness. Jim's face was not drawn for fierceness, but for amiability. It was a round, cheerful, blue-eyed face, which truly mirrored a round, cheerful, blue-eyed soul. Even contact, therefore, with this moustache gave Jim no aid. hand dropped, almost guiltily, to the steering-wheel; and at the same moment Jim jumped so that his head very nearly crashed against the top of the Paradise Super Saloon, for he heard a very cool, very clear, and very self-possessed little voice say, not two feet from his ear:

"I don't know where you're taking me."

Jim was paralysed.

"Er-this is Regent Street," he remarked.

"Yes, I knew that," said the voice.

"I'm taking you to Hanover Square,"

"Gracious! I don't want to go there."

"It happens to be on my way," said Jim coldly. "When we get there—I'm just turning down Conduit Street now, as you may recognise—I'm going to stop and ask

what you mean by jumping into . . . into my new car"—he could not quite keep the quiver of pride out of his voice—"in this . . . this most-er-unwarrantable and -er-romantic fashion."

"Romantic!" The voice seemed to sigh.

"Well, that's true. But look here . . ."
"One moment. Now!" Jim brought the Super Saloon to a stop, and turned upon his elbow. Then he caught his breath, for he was looking directly into the eyes of the most overwhelmingly lovely young woman he had ever seen. She had exquisite grey eyes, was fair, had delicious curling hair, a straight little nose, and a rosy mouth that was neither too large nor too small. Her cheeks were not round, as Jim's were, and yet neither were they flat. They were perfect, and the tender bloom upon them Nature's own. Something roguish, something very honest, and something even tragic in the face before him made Jim perfectly dizzy. He might frown (because he felt that it was his duty to frown); but the truth was that his heart resembled an old, affectionate, slave-like Airedale terrier. It even jumped and wagged its tail, or it would have done so if hearts had tails. So Jim, instead of continuing to frown, smiled quite irresistibly; and into the roguish yet tragic eyes before him leapt an expression of such trustingness and relief as to transfigure the interloper.

"Now," said Jim.

"I suppose I'd better get out," said the

voice, now very subdued.

"Unless I can drop you somewhere?" answered Jim, as casually as circumstances allowed. "You see, this is a new car," he continued, shooting a glance at her in case his voice had really quivered with pride of possession. "And a spanker; and I'm longing to try her. In fact, I'm . . . I was just going to try her. But if it's a convenience to you . . ." He paused.
"I've run away," said the girl.

"Yes. From a fellow with a monocle. In a grey morning suit. Top-hat. Umbrella.

"Gracious!" cried the stranger, paling.

"You know him?"

"You know my methods, Watson," answered Jim.

Again that look of relief, of trust. Almost

"When you've run away," said the girl, "you have a moment-

"When you want to go back," suggested Jim.

"Never!" Her eyes flashed. "Listen: I'll never go back! I'm desperate!"

Jim reflected. He was in a fix. Of course, it was all very well. He knew that the plain duty of every young man of four-and-twenty was unquestioningly to assist every runaway damsel of something less than that age. He was in possession of a perfect racer, was free of all engagements and entanglements, and was already head-over-ears in love with the captivating stranger. But, well—ought he to step into the breach, as it were? No question at all. It was his duty. Nobody so enchanting ought to be left unaided. He gave a sigh of relief. He was thankful to have settled that difficult question. There remained only the further question, what could he do?

"Well, if you're never going back," said Jim. "I mean, it's up to me . . . Isn't there anywhere I can take you?"

She shook her head wearily.

"No. I'd better go back to Auntie's." Then she shuddered. "I can't! Wait a minute. Let me think what's best to be done."

"You see what I mean," said Jim. "Here's the jolly old car." He cleared his throat a little. "Isn't there somebody you want to visit at Land's End or John o' Groats? She'll take us anywhere you say, at an average of fifty an hour."

"Land's End!" The stranger smiled.

"I wish there was," she said soberly.

"Now look here," said Jim. "Think this over. This is a good thought and well worth thinking. My young sister—well, she's a year older than me, really, but quite a kid-lives a day's journey away. I mean, if you're on the run . . ."

"Only from Auntie and . . ." murmured the stranger. "And I don't know your

sister."

"You soon would," asserted Jim. "And anyway, I know her. She's . . . she's all right. And she lives down near Exeter."
"Exeter—oh, dear!" The stranger gave

a gasp. She had grown quite pale.

"What's the matter?" asked Jim.
"Nothing. Exeter . . ." She was musing. "Oh, if only I could!"
"We could get down to Exeter in time

for dinner."

"Yes." The stranger's eyes sparkled. To herself she said, half aloud: "It's just possible." Her eyes were fixed upon Jim. 'What did you say your sister's name was?"

"Barron. She's married to a fellow—"

The curly head was shaken.

"They live at a place called Felpen, about fifty miles to the north of Exeter."

The colour spread in his new friend's

"I know Felpen," she said, rather breathlessly. "That's where my home is. That's where my Daddy lives. That's awfully exciting." She seemed to jump as she clasped her hands eagerly. "You could take me there, couldn't you? Yes . . . yes, please. If I could see my Daddy first . . . You see, I live with my Auntie in London . . . It's she . . . " The eager "If I could see Daddy words ceased. before——" Once again she scrutinised Jim very closely indeed. Then sighed, looked down, lay back in the car with her eyes closed, and at last nodded. "Yes, I will," she said, with a new sharp note of decision in her voice. "I'll go with you. And let's hurry. It's most awfully important to hurry. First of all, I'll come into the front seat beside you, so that we can talk."

"I was just going to suggest it," cried Jim, exuberantly elated.

## III.

THE hedges flew by. The roads were consumed. Mile after mile did the Paradise Super Saloon fly through the country. She was past all policemen and all Automobile Association scouts long before they could memorise her index mark and registration number. She purred up the hills and along the level. She whizzed down inclines, round corners, and through the zigzags of a thousand windings. At first, along the roads nearer London, her progress was sedate compared with what it afterwards became: but when once houses fell behind and the path opened clear before Jim's eye, he stepped joyously upon the throttle and felt the greatest thrills of his life. His eyes shone; his cheeks glowed. Exultation dwarfed every other feeling in his breast.

"She's a peach!" he shouted once. He was tempted to add: "So are you!" For Elizabeth (she had told him her name, which was Elizabeth Monway, in exchange for his own, which was James Peveril Outhwaite) was snugly at his side; and with the flashing past of every milestone, which is to say, about each moment of the journey, Jim fell deeper and deeper in love with her. It was not, dash it! he told himself, just her loveliness that did it, but the way she spoke, the way she turned her head, the little curve of her cheek, the faint half-smile upon her lips, and the occasional serious glance she threw in his own direction. She was more than a

peach. She was a perfect dear.

"And of course I'm a fool," was a thought that once tumbled out of the strange mixture of thoughts leaping in his head. For of course there was more in this than met the Her flight, her passionate determination to run away, the long-tailed dude who had run after her. . . . Was that monocled pest her husband? Her fiancé? Why had she run? Jim sighed sharply. He glimpsed the fact that he was a stranger to her, that to-morrow they would again be strangers. He would never seen her again. He would drive back to London in the Paradise Super Saloon, but that was the only contact with Paradise that he would ever know. Strange how an hour could make such a difference! Until an hour ago Jim's hope of earthly happiness had lain solely in the possession of a Paradise Super Saloon. Now-The knowledge of the immeasurable heights to which his ideals had leapt in a single hour sobered him. It saddened him. He felt an old man-until he looked again at Elizabeth, and instantly became young again. The Paradise Super Saloon took the next corner (a sharp one) upon two wheels.

# IV.

As the journey advanced, Elizabeth showed signs of increasing excitement. He could see that she bit her pretty nether lip and that her hands were pressed tightly together.

"Quick, quick," she once whispered. Then, at one point: "I know where we are. Oh, it's tremendously exciting. We're getting very close. Now, look: if you leave the Exeter road presently . . . you'll see a road . . . It takes us across the moor. Not a good road, but it saves several miles. It's the road Daddy always takes. I'll show you. We want to go north from here." She waved her arm vaguely.

"Look here, do you really know?"

demanded Jim.

"Not this bit," she admitted eagerly; not for a long way yet. But I shall

recognise it. You want to go . . ."

Obediently, though with doubt, Jim followed her directions. The road she indicated was a bad one, and it led across some very disagreeable moorland, through a waste, bare and menacing. Still, it was Elizabeth's desire, and he must obey.

"We shall soon come to the road I want," she implored, when she saw that he was

slightly perturbed. "Then we shall strike Daddy's road. Really, we shall. And it's so awfully important that I should see him before Auntie does. . . ."

"That's all right," cried Jim. "Don't

you worry!"

"It's lovely. Now, is that a road? No. Straight on. This moorland all looks so much alike. But we can't be more than thirty or forty miles from home. It's wonderful!"

They sped on, mile after mile, the glorious springs of the Paradise Super Saloon minimising all the bumps and ruts in that unpleasant road, and Jim's really excellent driving saving them often enough from

further disagreeables.

"Now look. Isn't that something like a road on the left?" cried Elizabeth. Sure enough, when they came up to it, there was a winding road to the left across the moor, and an old sign-post said: "To EXETER." "You don't take this; but I know we're right, because that's the road Daddy takes. He comes down another road on the right, comes back to here. . . ."

"He must have a jolly well-sprung car," observed Jim, grinning, "if he makes the

journey often."

They were past the left-hand turning, and Elizabeth was springing forward in excitement, when a very peculiar thing happened. An unexpected, inexplicable, overwhelmingly disconcerting thing. The Paradise Super Saloon came gently to a stop, as if it had been bound by some invisible spell. It was extraordinary. Jim had felt the power slackening for perhaps a courle of hundred yards; but now there was no strength at all in the throttle. He tried his brakes: they were in good order. He leapt down from his seat and lifted the bonnet. Then, like a hare, he came back and glared at his dashboard and the petrol gauge. His tank, which had been filled before he left London, was empty.

"Good Lord!" he muttered. Elizabeth was watching him.

"Something wrong?" she asked

anxiously.

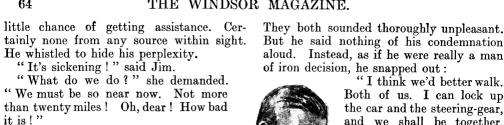
"Petrol," he said briefly. "Tank's leaking. Plague on these new cars! Petrol's all gone."

Her face paled.

"But how awful!" she groaned. "Can't

anything be done?"

Jim shook his head. He was secretly filled with consternation. Here they were, upon a bad side-road, miles from anywhere, with



"First of all," said Jim, as hopefully as he could, "we consider." He considered. Then he stared all round them at the rugged landscape. "If I get out and walk," he went on, "leaving you to wait in the car, somebody may come along and knock you on the head. If we both walk, we leave the car and may never see it again. If we both stay here we

"I think we'd better walk. Both of us. I can lock up the car and the steering-gear, and we shall be together. What do you say?" She nodded. "I think so. I wish we

far-it was. My shoes won't stand a fivemile tramp." Jim frowned in deep

knew how far-really how

thought. "We can't guess how far," he said. 'That's the trouble.



may stay for a couple of days." "And I'm hungry already," said Elizabeth.

"Together the wayfarers dined, Elizabeth in the chair and Jim perched upon the table.

"Of course, I could go and trap a rabbit or a bird and we could cook it here," proceeded Jim lugubriously. "But somehow that's not really my idea of a picnic."

"Unless you're an expert," she teased. "You don't realise that this is serious," he told her.

"On the contrary," replied Elizabeth gravely, "it's much more serious than you realise. Because Auntie and Horace . . ."

To himself Jim cursed Auntie and Horace.

If I knew, I'd leave you here." They looked at each other in perfect consternation.

"Come along," said Elizabeth sharply, and prepared to descend from the Paradise Super Saloon. Jim caught her hand and helped her to step down. Their eyes met soberly and Jim's clasp tightened for an

instant. Then he set himself to the task of locking up. A moment later, leaving the Super Saloon as if blushing for its imperfections, they began to trudge along that white road together. The sun was rather alarmingly brilliant, as if it were already thinking lightly of bed. Some black clouds were heaped upon the distant horizon, and these also might have given the travellers occasion for thought.

#### $\mathbf{v}$

An hour later the two were still walking; but Elizabeth now held Jim's arm. Her shoes had not stood contact with the hard road very successfully, and their progress

was slow and painful. The sun was dipping and shadows were long. No sign of a town, or even a house, reassured the two travellers. Jim talked desperately, but his heart was low.

"Bound to find something soon," he cried in a hearty voice of encouragement.

"Sure to," agreed Elizabeth, limping.

And as if their words had been spoken just in time, they caught sight of a roof at the next turn. A low, slated roof, very mean and unpromising; but a roof!

"Eureka!" cried Jim. They hastened

their steps.

As they came nearer the cottage looked more and more unpromising. It stood quite



"With bright eager eyes and ready laughter, they had become children again. They were happy."

alone amid a bare waste, and before it there was a rough growth of rank grass, wholly untended. The windows were dirty; the place had a desolate appearance.

"Here's sorry cheer!" thought Jim. But he did not say anything. He was conscious of a little dragging upon his arm.

"Don't let's go there," whispered Elizabeth.

"But, my dear, you're tired out!"

"I don't like the look of it."

"Nor do I. But it's better—Good Lord, it's empty!"

They had not realised, until Jim blurted out this exclamation of horror, how very high their hearts had climbed at sight of that roof. But now they were in despair. The cottage was indeed empty. Creeping close to its front window, they could see a small room and a bare floor. It was the picture of desolation. Elizabeth could not restrain a heavy sigh of dismay, the sound of which was heart-rending. They now stared at each other in complete gloom.

"Wait a tick!" Jim drew his knife, slipped the catch of the window, climbed up, and disappeared within the house. An instant later he reappeared at the front door, having found that it was fastened only by an ordinary lock. "Welcome to Liberty Hall!" said he jovially. "There's a chair in the back room there. Come in and rest."

It was true. The kitchen contained a chair and a table; nothing more. Its walls were whitewashed and quite clean, but it was otherwise bare and uninviting.

Wearily, Elizabeth subsided into the chair, while Jim explored the cottage. She heard him clambering up the stairs. Then silence. In a moment he came down again, shaking his head.

"No go," he announced. "A bit of candle only. I've brought it down; might come in handy. What a crank I am! It would have been better to leave you in the car. Is that a cupboard?"

It was a cupboard, to the right of the miserable fireplace. He pulled open the door. An astonishing sight was before them. Both uttered loud ejaculations.

"Good Lord!" cried Jim. For there was a large bottle of beer upon the shelf of the cupboard, and beside it a tumbler, while farther to the right was a tin box of biscuits. "Hurray! Hurray!" Jim spoke for both. What a stroke of luck! What a marvel! Somebody had evidently planned to return one day to this cottage.

Well, whoever had placed the bottle of beer and the biscuits in that cupboard had saved the lives of Jim and Elizabeth! Loud cheers for the unknown! With a bound, Jim had the food and drink before Elizabeth, and had prised open the tin of biscuits. were as crisp as could be. They were perfect. Together the wayfarers dined, Elizabeth in the chair and Jim perched upon the table. They did not notice, in their glee, that the light was changing from gold to grey. their famished and discouraged state they could only dwell upon present relief; and it was so great that for them the future did not exist. Both Jim and Elizabeth had forgotten the Paradise Super Saloon. Both had forgotten London and the Grand Metropolitan Hotel, and all that had happened there a thousand years ago. With bright eager eyes and ready laughter, they had become children again. They were happy.

# VI.

AND as Jim was draining his glass for the last time he cocked his eye at the light.

"By Jove!" said he. "Getting dark!" Too true. The pearly dusk was already gathering. It would not be dark for another hour, perhaps; but the light was going. was absolutely necessary that they should And so Jim, tearing a page from his note-book, wrote "Many thanks," and left it, with some money, in the cupboard with the empty bottle and the half-empty tin. He fastened the window by which he had entered, and they slammed the door of that bare little cottage which yet had so marvellously afforded them rest and refreshment. It seemed the most natural thing for Jim to tuck Elizabeth's arm under his own as they took once more to the road. He thrilled at the touch, but he did not allow Elizabeth to see the hungry look in his eyes.

Once they had begun to walk, it became evident that she was almost unbearably tired. She could hardly bear to put her feet to the ground. Her shoes were quite inadequate for such rough usage.

"Of course," said Jim. "I could carry

you."

"But you're not going to," answered Elizabeth hastily—almost sharply. She looked away. Then she gave his arm a slight pressure of gratitude for his considerateness. "I can manage splendidly." Then she gasped. "Look, Jim!" she cried. "What's that?"

A dim speck upon the road before them. A speck immediately lost in the dusk, only

to appear again, to be lost, and once again to be seen.

"It's a car!" shouted Jim. "We'll wave. We'll stop it. They'll take us . . ."

But even as he spoke his voice died. The speck had disappeared. Darkness was coming. Darkness increased by those heavy black clouds, now greatly augmented, which until this moment they had not noticed. The clouds were slowly spreading across the sky, coming towards the travellers.

"Was it a car?" Elizabeth was breath-

less.

"If it was, your cross-road's somewhere near," said Jim grimly; "for the car's going away from us. Golly, look at that!"

Somewhere far in the distance a brilliant streak of lightning shot across the sky. An instant later there was the low roar of thunder. A wind swept suddenly towards them and died away. More lightning flared, revealing the bareness of what lay half hidden in the gathering murk. A tremendous rolling of thunder ran across the earth. The wind came again, threateningly. As if by joint consent, the two stopped abruptly in their walk.

"This is lively!" exclaimed Elizabeth in a rather uncertain voice. "I don't like it, Jim."

"We'd better go back!" Jim said. "It's going to pelt. Don't you think so? Let's run."

They turned and ran, and Elizabeth stumbled.

"I can't!" she stammered. "Jim, I can't!"

Without a word, he stooped and caught her up. She was like a feather. He could not run with such a burden, but he was exultingly happy. She was pressed close to his breast; her arm was about his neck. He threw back his shoulders and strode onward. As the storm broke, he staggered once again up to the door of the cottage, lowered Elizabeth to her feet, again prised open the window, opened the door, led her to the kitchen and her old chair. They could see the white vehemence of the lightning, hear the violent crashing of the thunder, and at last the hissing of torrential rain. In the darkness they sat upon the edge of the table, Jim with one arm about Elizabeth, as if to shield her from the elements. Darker and darker it grew. The wind roared without and the rain splattered against the window-panes. They were alone, and safe, friends, strangers, linked by as curious a

chain of happenings as either could have considered possible.

# VII.

So two hours passed, and they spoke in low tones.

"What shall we do?" asked Elizabeth.
"Would you like some more biscuits?"

"No.

"We'll start out again when the storm passes. We can't be far from a town now, because that car we saw must have come from somewhere and must be going somewhere. Or a car may come past here. There's nothing to do but wait here till the storm's over."

"If we could only get into touch with Daddy. If there were a telephone here."

"I've looked," said Jim.

"It's such a lonely road."

Jim was silent. He had been well aware of that since before their mishap. He was the more aware of it now.

"After all, all roads are used," he began.
"This one isn't," said Elizabeth. "We used to call it Daddy's road, because whenever we came along it we never met another

car."

Jim's heart sank lower.

"Perhaps your father will come along it himself," he suggested, to cheer her.

Elizabeth shook her head.

"Not at night," she said. "He wouldn't go into Exeter at night—except to meet a train."

"He might be going to meet a train," Jim said.

Her silence was sufficient answer. So they sat for a long time, listening to the dying storm. Their happiness was succeeded by a realisation of the difficulties of their position. Both grew serious. At last:

"I wonder what Horace will say," mur-

mured Elizabeth.

"Who's Horace?" demanded Jim fiercely, his heart thumping.

"The man I ran away from."

There was a dryness in Jim's throat. For a moment he could not speak. With an effort, and in a hoarse, unnatural tone, he asked:

"Are you engaged to him?"

Elizabeth seemed to have comparable difficulty in speaking. At last she nodded.

"I suppose so," she drearily made answer. "You'll have to throw him over," said

"You'll have to throw him over," sai

A long silence.

"I did, to-day."

"Well, that's easy."

"But Horace wouldn't hear of it. You could never convince Horace. He's the sort of man who can't understand that . . . well, that he's not wanted. And he's backed up by Auntie. Auntie insists on my marrying him. Horace insists. I've said I won't. But what's the good? He won't take 'No,' and Auntie's his friend. That's why I've run away. Don't you see?" She almost stamped in her revived exasperation. "Oh, it's maddening. And they've made Daddy think-" Tears came into Elizabeth's eyes—tears of anger and shame. Jim turned the matter over in his mind. He felt terribly slow and puzzled. At last he ventured:

"Did you mean to break it off to-day? I mean——"

Another silence.

"I meant to say that it was never 'on,' but I couldn't. It wasn't any good. He just smiles indulgently. He can't take it in. That's why I ran."

"You don't mean you-" Jim was stifling. There was no answer. "But it's all perfectly ridiculous. Nobody can force you into marriage like that."

"Auntie can. Horace can. Daddy can."

"But your father—"

"If I could see him. But you see I can't. We're here, and they'll get him, and he'll be stern. And I shall give in—in the end simply because I can't escape. I've tried everything. To-day I told Horace I liked somebody else."

Jim died that moment.

"And do you?" he managed at length to gulp.
"No." A heavy sigh.

Two heavy sighs.

"Didn't he believe it?"

"No, he didn't. He didn't see how I could. He kept on smiling indulgently."

"He's a fool," said Jim bluntly. "And anyway, if you don't want him you can stick to that."

"You don't know Horace," Elizabeth said forlornly. "And you don't know my aunt. I've had months of fighting, and if anything else had been possible I shouldn't have run away."

"It's ridiculous!" cried Jim, hot with irritation. "I mean . . . of course, you could . . . I mean, you could marry me,

couldn't you?"

"No! No!" exclaimed Elizabeth, and started convulsively from him. "Don't get that idea into your head." She was like steel, transformed, bitter and defensive.

"Put it right away. I couldn't." her tone changed. Her voice broke. "It's . . . it's awfully dear of you." She was standing at a distance, as rigid as a statue, quite unapproachable. "But, you see, it's out of the question."

Jim felt as though a dagger had been driven into his heart. In the darkness he bowed his head, clenching his fists, filled with despair. And yet, how could he have expected otherwise? As she said, the thought was impossible.

"Well, then, forget it," he said miserably. "I only . . . I mean . . . Come and sit down again. I thought, perhaps——"

"You were wrong. It's impossible." She was coldness itself, frozen, as if at an insult. "I shall sit in this chair." She sat down, ignoring him. Jim stared gloomily into nothingness. He was sorely wounded, the more so because he felt she was right. It was impossible that anybody so lovely should care for a clumsy brute like himself.

For ten minutes they sat in silence. thunder gradually subsided, and the rain. Out of doors there was no sound but that of the wandering wind. Then Jim strained his ears. Was that anything? Was it perhaps a faint humming? Did he want to hear anything? Supposing help came; didn't that mean he would lose her for ever? He could bear anything but that. To lose her for ever would be anguish indescribable. Yet he had his duty—

"Just a tick!" he cried, running through to the front door. It was! He could see two pin-points of light far away. A car! And coming this way! As quick as thought, he ran back to the kitchen, caught up the little stump of candle, lighted it and set it in the front window. Then he ran out into the road. The humming was louder; the lights he had seen were larger and brighter.

"Hi!" shouted Jim. "Hi! Hi!"

# VIII.

For an instant he had a horrible fear that the car was not going to draw up. When it did so, Jim saw that there was only one occupant, the driver, an elderly man with a rather hooked nose and a white moustache. A white face, too, and an agitated manner.

"What is it? What is it?" demanded this man impatiently. He was not unfriendly, but in a state of extreme excitement. "I'm in a great hurry. I have to be at Exeter in thirty minutes to meet a train. What d'you say? A breakdown? Well, I don't know . . . I don't know.

The tank, you say? I'm in such a hurry. Worse than a hurry, in fact." His head was jerking with impatience. "I really don't know what to say. I'm loath to leave strangers, and yet——"

Jim said earnestly:

"For God's sake don't refuse me, sir. The circumstances . . . The young lady is in great distress."

"And so am I, my friend," said the motorist, bitterly enough. "The greatest distress, I assure you. Her distress can be nothing to mine-"

Jim looked over his shoulder. He could see in the dimness that Elizabeth was at the door of the hovel, that she had paused there, waiting to know the result of Jim's intercession. Would it not be better to let her plead with the stranger?

"Elizabeth!" he called eagerly.

"Elizabeth!" cried the motorist. She came forward into the half-light.

"Why, Daddy!"

"Elizabeth. Thank God!"

Jim fell back. He saw her run from the doorway and up to the stranger's car; saw her jump up beside the stranger and throw her arms about his neck; heard her sob twice, uncontrollably. Then he turned away. It seemed to him that he could bear no more. At least the intolerable suspense, the responsibility, was gone. But with the responsibility went also the light of his life. He walked a few steps and stood irresolute. Of course Elizabeth would go off with the stranger; he would walk back to his Paradise Super Saloon and sit in it all night, wakeful, mortified, wretched; and tomorrow, or some other day, he would be rescued and towed ignominiously into the nearest town. And that would be all. Just his luck! Well?

# IX.

The colloquy of father and daughter seemed endless. It went on and on, their voices rising and falling. Jim thought he heard Elizabeth crying. . . . But it ended at last and Elizabeth came in search of Jim.

"Daddy's going to Exeter to meet Horace," she said. "Horace telegraphed to him, saying I was lost, and mad, and is on his way down here to tell the tale. Daddy's been in an awful state; but he's quite happy now. He'll drive you to your car, and then send out some mechanics from the next town he passes on his way to Exeter——"

"That's what I thought," said Jim

dully.

"Afterwards, you're to come home with us for the night."

"Thanks, but no," objected Jim.

very good of him; but no."
"Why not?" Her question was swift almost tragic.

"I'll go with the car," Jim said obstinately. "You . . . you're going to make it

up with Horace, and-

"Nobody could make it up with Horace, whatever happens. Daddy has promised. Do come, Jim," she was pleading. Tears stood in her eyes. She was subtly changed, sweet and humble.

Jim was stiff. He was afraid that his voice would tremble. There was no consolation for him in her scorn for Horace. None.

"Anyway," he continued in a flat voice, "you've got no further use for me. You showed that just now, in the cottage, when you said it was impossible."

"Impossible?" exclaimed Elizabeth.

thought you were-"

"I'd better drop out here," Jim went on.
"I shall always be——" A lump in his throat made further speech for the moment a matter of insuperable difficulty.

"Oh!" There was no expression in her voice but that of surprise. He could not see her face—except that it was like marble.

"I mean, I'm only a . . . only a chap that loves you," stammered Jim sadly.

"Loves." Her voice caressed the word.

He did not hear her.

"And is glad . . . I mean, I'm glad he's ... I've been able to help. I'm sorry about all that's happened—the breakdown and all that. It was bad luck, and . . . I want to say, I never meant, when I said that to vou-

Elizabeth!" called her father.

"Come and be introduced," she said, catching Jim's hand. There was new, thrilling excitement in her tone, in her manner, in the communicated warmth and tenseness of her little hand. Unwillingly, sheepishly, Jim went with her, and listened in growing amazement to what followed. "Daddy, this is Jim. He's rather long-winded and incomprehensible, but . . . but he's the second greatest dear in the world. Jim, this is Daddy, the first greatest."

"How d'you do, sir? I hope you-

"How d'you do? I think we owe you a debt of gratitude."

"Not at all," stammered Jim. mean-

"And Daddy," added Elizabeth. "While

you go and meet Horace—and, I hope, send him back to London again by the next train—or at any rate make him face facts—Jim and I will wait in Jim's big car. It's a marvellous car, the finest car I've ever seen, and I've quite fallen in love with it."

"High praise!" agreed her father. "I must see this car. Might I ask what make

it is, er . . . Jim?"

"It's a Paradise Super Saloon, sir," mumbled Jim. His knees seemed to be weak. His cheeks were as hot as fire. He was bewildered by the sudden change in Elizabeth, and by her infectious new lightheartedness, which overwhelmed him.

"A most promising name," said Mr. Monway. "I shall look forward to seeing her later. But now we must get on, or that poor fellow will be stranded. How very fortunate, indeed, that he happens to be coming, after all. Otherwise—"

"Amazing bit of luck, sir," agreed Jim

heartily.

"Jim!" For once Elizabeth was not as quick as he. But a moment later, very gently, she added, "I see."

•

"Well, jump in, jump in. You're sure you won't both come to Exeter?"

"Quite sure, Daddy," said Elizabeth.
"Jim will chaperon me—won't you, Jim?"
"Got a lot to discuss," explained Jim.

They climbed into the back seats of Mr. Monway's car and were hidden. Elizabeth's expression, half seen by Jim in that dim light, took his breath away, so full was it of love and roguish humility. Irresistible, indeed; so that, as Mr. Monway stooped to manipulate his starter, Jim caught her hand and carried it to his heart. Her cheek was so near that he timidly just touched it with his lips.

"Isn't this a happy ending?" whispered Elizabeth. Then, inconsequently: "Poor Horace!" She sat very quiet for a moment, while the car sped on, picking up the road in front with its brave headlights. Then she said, very low: "You do mean it, don't

ou?

"Mean?" answered Jim, in the same low tone. "I'm staggered. But I adore you." He put his arm about her in the darkness.

**◎ ◎ ◎ ◎** 

# MY BABY'S HANDS.

I SOMETIMES think my baby's hands Are like the petals of a rose, As velvet soft and sweetly pink It gently in the garden blows.

And yet again it seems to me
They must be butterflies at play,
As restlessly, and never still,
They flutter all the livelong day.

And then I think, when she's asleep,
They're like twin snowflakes come to rest,
As, lightly, softly floating down
They gently lie upon her breast.

But whether lying soft and still,
Or like pink butterflies they dart,
Those tiny hands remorseless stay
For ever plucking at my heart!
DOROTHY DANE.



# A RACE FOR LIFE

• By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES •

ING-A-LING-A-LING went the telephone on Hercules Popeau's table. He took the receiver off, feeling quite certain that he would be told whoever it was had been given a wrong number. His number was known to very few of his friends, for his long connection with that branch of the Paris police known as La Sûreté, had induced in a man naturally frank to a fault, habits of caution and secretiveness. Also, he had only just been installed in the charming rooms which he had taken on a permanent basis in the oldworld stately Hotel Paragon which lies just off the Boulevard St. Germain.

"Allo! Allo!" he called out sharply. "Who d'you suppose you're asking for?"

"My venerated master, Herculean Popeau," came the laughing answer.

"Good day, Maroquin! What can I do for you, my boy? I suppose you want me to lunch to-morrow instead of to-day—eh?"

"Nothing of the sort!" came the instant, indignant answer. "On the contrary, I want you to come now, at once. I have an English lady in my office, sent me by one of my London correspondents. He telephoned and told me about her last night, but I could make nothing of the story, except that he does not believe in it himself! But she has plenty of money to spend, it seems, so I may as well get some of it. Unluckily she knows very little French, and I, as you are aware, know hardly any English."

"What does she want you to do?"

"That's what I want you to tell me. I'm speaking from the Post Office, for I know by experience that even those who profess complete ignorance of our beautiful language generally understand what one does not wish them to hear."

"I'll come at once. By the way, what is

her name?"

"She is a Mrs. Brantwood, and charming,

dear friend, charming!"

Hercules Popeau went through into the spacious panelled bedroom which opened out of his study. Already it had assumed a home-like look, for it contained his own furniture. Opening a huge Breton carved wood cupboard, he got out of it a greatcoat, for it was cold as only Paris can be cold a few days before Christmas. Then, with his hat and stick in his hand, he went quickly down the wide staircase where just a little over a hundred years ago a Marshal of France and his beautiful wife had stood many an hour receiving their guests, including, according to tradition, on one occasion at least, Napoleon and Marie Louise.

As he went through the hall he stayed his steps for a moment, and smiled pleasantly at Madame la Patronne. "Have you any clients coming to-day?" he inquired

genially.

She shook her head a little anxiously. "Everything's very quiet—too quiet. But we generally get a certain number of provincials for the New Year. What we long for are some English and Americans."

Hercules Popeau hastened on, through the great paved courtyard, to the boulevard. He looked longingly at a taxi, but he was a thrifty Frenchman, for all his cosmopolitan experiences, so he waited in the bitter wind for an omnibus. At last one came up, and as he rattled along in it, he visualised what this autobus must have looked like transferred into a perambulating meat-safe, when rushing up food to the Front. No Frenchman of our time ever forgets the War for more than a few minutes of his waking hours.

Within less than ten minutes he was across the Seine, and in the narrow street, behind the Louvre, where his friend Maroquin had lately set up a Secret Enquiry Agency. The young man had started on his own against Hercules Popeau's advice. The older man would have liked his pupil to remain longer in the public service. But very confident Maroquin had done extremely well in a big murder mystery case, and his name had even

been mentioned in the newspapers. So his father-in-law had provided the capital for him to start on what is an expensive, as well as, often, a dangerous business. Hercules Popeau, during his own last year at the Sûreté, had gone to a great deal of trouble to help-he called it "to form "-young Maroquin. He had tried hard to persuade him to learn more than a mere smattering of English and German, but there he had been up against French, or rather Parisian, "There are plenty of people insularity. who can speak languages," had exclaimed Maroquin. "International crime does not interest me. Our own evilly-disposed countrymen will provide me with plenty of work!"

"No doubt. But most of the money in the world is now in the hands of Germans and Americans," the other had answered sadly.

As Hercules Popeau hurried up the narrow street he was surprised to see his former colleague hurrying towards him. "I've come to meet you, for it's so awkward in that tiny office of mine, where everything can be overheard from one room to the other!" For so good-natured and easygoing a young man Maroquin looked sulky and put out.

"I have a most important case waiting for me at Asnières," he went on. "And now my morning has been wasted over this English lady! It might be worse, for she is a very pretty woman, in spite of her tears."

"What does your London agent say about her?" interjected Popeau. By this time the two men had arrived at the house where Maroquin's office lay on the fourth storey.

"All my London man has to say," replied the other crossly, "is that there is plenty of money and a big bonus once success is assured. It concerns one of those tiresome disappearance cases. I should think, reading between the lines of his letter, that he feels doubtful of success. Now I cannot afford to waste my time with no result; I have not only a wife—I now have a strong baby son to consider!" and he smiled for the first time.

"Not afford to waste time? That is a very foolish thing to say!" exclaimed Hercules Popeau with a touch of sternness. "You will make no headway, Maroquin, if you start in our way of life with that point of view. As for your little boy, there will be very little butter on his bread if you fail in business."

The other looked just a little ashamed. "You must forgive me," he muttered, "but

all the morning I have been longing to get to Asnières!"

Popeau waited for a few moments, his hands clasped behind his back in what the other knew was his characteristic thinking attitude. Then he said suddenly: "Look here, Maroquin? Go off now, at once, to this other job of yours. I will interview this lady, and take on the job myself, if I judge it well to do so. My only stipulation"—a twinkle came into his eyes,—"if I pull it off for you, my friend, will be that you must give half the fee earned, whatever it may be, to my favourite charity, the 'Drop of Milk.' As to our lunch, let us postpone it till to-morrow."

Maroquin's face lit up with relief. He seized the other man's hand. "Thank you a million times," he cried. "I cannot afford to take up speculative work. Once more you have earned your nickname."

"My nickname?" Popeau smiled. "I had more than one nickname before I laid

myself on the shelf."

"I mean your nicest nickname, that of

'Papa Popeau'!"

While this short colloquy was going on under the porte cochère, Maroquin's English client, Miranda Brantwood, was sitting in his office, her heart full of bitter pain. she had dried her tears, yet she felt even more miserable than she had felt, say, ten minutes ago when, in her indifferent French, she had still been struggling to tell the young man the reason why she had flown from London to Paris that morning. She was a sensitive woman, and instinctively she had felt that Maroquin was not really interested in her case, though he had shown a good deal of concern at her evident distress. had supposed the main lines of her somewhat peculiar story were already known to the French secret enquiry agent. Only after she had been speaking for some time had she realised, with dismay, that she was dealing with a foreigner who was substantially ignorant of what had brought her to Paris, or of how very urgent was the matter. At last, however, she had found a phrase which had awakened his attention.

"It's a race for life!" she had sobbed

despairingly.

Maroquin had drawn towards him a dictionary, looked up the word "race," and there had come into his face a sudden look of understanding. But even then she found it impossible to make him realise why this question of finding where her husband was staying in Paris was so horribly urgent. It was the life

of the man she loved, though they had now been separated for over a year, that she believed in danger.

The door of the shabby little office—so unlike the well-furnished comfortable room of Maroquin's London correspondent—opened, and an elderly man came in. "You are Mrs. Brantwood?" he said in a kindly tone.

She rose to her feet, and somehow, she could not have told you why, she suddenly felt a little less miserable. She held out her hand, and the big Frenchman took it in a cool, firm, kindly grasp. He turned and shut the door; took a chair from behind the deal table where Maroquin had sat, and placed it close to her.

"Now then, as you say in your country, tell me all about it!" he ordered in a cheerful, kindly tone. "My friend Maroquin has given over your case into my hands, and I am here to give you all the

help in my power——"

Then something happened which touched Hercules Popeau. Tears began running down her pale face. "I'm so glad," she sobbed, "so glad to have at last found someone who is willing to help me, that I'm really

crying for joy!"

Any man would have been flattered, how far more so this man who, with all his terrible knowledge of the ugly, sinister side of human nature, was yet still tender-hearted, and always easily moved by any human being's distress. Woman, to Hercules Popeau, was still a fragile, sensitive creature, quite unfit to battle with the cold winds of life.

"I suppose that you know something of England and of English ways?" she began

nervously.

"Yes, I think I may claim to know a great deal about England," he answered. "My work often took me to London in the old days."

"You know," she went on, "about our

laws of entail?"

He hesitated, for he did not know what the word "entail" signified, but he concealed this lack of knowledge. "In what way," he asked, "does that law affect you?"

She looked at him earnestly, and he was struck and moved by her fair, delicate, refined type of beauty. Maroquin had not exaggerated. Mrs. Brantwood was a very pretty woman.

"My husband is heir to a great property, as well as to a baronetcy, for he is greatnephew to Sir John Brantwood. Sir John has never married, and he is now a very old man. He has two great-nephews, my husband, Jack Brantwood, and Jack's first cousin, Arthur. Now Arthur is what we call in England a wastrel. At a time when my husband was in Australia, and had been completely lost sight of by his family, so much so that he was presumed to be dead, Arthur went to a moneylender, and raised a huge sum of money on what were then regarded as his certain prospects."

"And then your husband came back? A very painful return from the dead for the moneylender!" observed Hercules

Popeau dryly.

"How wonderful of you to have guessed so quickly what happened——"

"Was it not obvious?"

"Then you also realise—"

"—that between that moneylender and his money there only stands your husband's life?"

She half rose from her chair, as she exclaimed excitedly, "And old Sir John is now very ill; in fact, he is dying. I'm convinced," and a wild look came over her face, "that an effort will be made during the next few days to bring about my husband's death here, in Paris."

"Do you seriously believe," said Popeau thoughtfully, "that a moneylender, however much he stands to lose, would murder

for profit?"

"I do not think that! The man who I feel sure—sure, Monsieur Popeau—intends to bring about my husband's death is what we call the moneylender's 'tout.' His name is Jim Patterdale. He is a man of good family, but he has been living on his wits for the last twenty years. It was he who introduced the business to the moneylender, and if my husband dies before Sir John, Jim Patterdale will get twelve thousand pounds commission. Blood money," she Then, more calmly she went on: "He has been the evil genius of both my husband and of foolish Arthur Brantwood. He hates me, and it was he who, some months ago, brought about the quarrel between Jack and myself which led to our parting. Yet Jack loves me-I know he does," she ended up woefully.

"Your husband is here, in Paris?"

"Yes—and with Jim Patterdale. But where I do not know. It is that I have come to find out."

"Where are you staying yourself?"

"I came straight from the aviation ground here. I thought the English detective I employ would have explained everything to Maroquin. But the truth is that Mr. Brown does not believe my husband is in any danger. He laughs at the idea, and thinks me a foolish, hysterical, jealous woman, who hopes to get her husband back by pretending a crazy fear for his safety."

"I am not like Mr. Brown," observed Popeau thoughtfully. "I have seen too much of human nature not to realise that there are innumerable human beings who will do anything—anything, mark you—for

money."

"Mr. Brown believes that too. But he thinks such people stop short of murder, especially if they are in what we call society,"

she said in a low trembling voice.

"He is quite wrong there," answered Popeau dryly, "and for this reason. The unscrupulous man who belongs by birth and upbringing to a secure, solid, social stratum, is apt to think that whatever he may do Nemesis will surely pass him by."

"Jim Patterdale," said Mrs. Brantwood, "has always lived in luxury, for he has charming manners. But lately he has been

dreadfully hard up."

"Does he go by more than one name?" asked Popeau. "I mean by that, is he the sort of man who has ever got into trouble

with the police?"

She shook her head. "Not that I ever heard of! He would not dare to travel under any name but his own, for, at any moment, he might meet someone who knows him quite well. What I really fear—"She stopped; a look of terror had come over her face.

"Yes, what is it you really fear? Try and be honest with me. It will help me to

help you."

"I fear he will hire an apache to kill my husband. He is far too crafty to do so himself. I once heard him say," she grew red, "that a Frenchman will do anything

for money."

"That peculiarity is not confined to my countrymen, Mrs. Brantwood." He smiled, "Now the first thing we have to discover is where this gentleman and your husband are staying. From what you tell me I should imagine that they have gone to a good hotel."

"Nothing but the best is good enough for Jim Patterdale. But my husband has always been careful about money, and as he may be paying the bill, I feel sure they won't go to a really expensive place. Mr. Brown says that looking for the two will be like looking for a needle in a bundle

of hay. Do you agree with him as to that?"

He shook his head. "That might have been so in the old days, before the War, but now, thanks to the passport system which is so much abused in your country it is by no means easy for a foreigner to hide himself in Paris."

He got up. "We ought to be getting busy, Madame. I have a suite of rooms in the Hotel Paragon, just off the Boulevard St. Germain. It is respectable and quiet, kept, too, by an excellent couple. The woman is what you call in England 'a very nice woman,' so, unless you have reason to prefer one place to another, I advise, Mrs. Brantwood, that you allow me to escort you there. It will have the great advantage that you and I can keep in constant touch. Try and be cheerful. I believe that the running of your husband to earth—to use a sporting metaphor—will turn out far easier than you think."

"But do you realise that it is a race for life?"

"Yes, I do realise that. But you may not know that often that kind of race takes much longer to run than anyone would believe possible. After leaving you at the Hotel Paragon I will get in touch with the man who has charge of the foreign passport department at the Prefecture of Police. Unless I am much mistaken, we shall at any rate very soon discover where these two gentlemen are staying."

As they were going out of the door of the little office, Mrs. Brantwood suddenly lifted her beautiful blue eyes to her new-found friend. "I feel such a brute," she murmured, "not to have already thanked you for your wonderful goodness to me."

## II.

MRS. BRANTWOOD had spent three long, troubled days full of anxious misery, and she was still waiting for news to-day, while sitting in the charming sitting-room which Hercules Popeau had arranged to be put aside for her use in the Hotel Paragon, and that looked so little like part of an hotel.

Before going out, early on that cold, snowy morning, he had told her that by lunch-time he would have news for her. But the agony of suspense was telling on her, and, as the time went slowly by, more than once she wondered whether after all the London private enquiry agent had been right, and she had got hold of a mare's nest? But she knew that this good new friend of hers,

Hercules Popeau, had never wavered in his belief that she was right.

At half-past twelve he came in, and at once he exclaimed, "I've run our couple to earth at last! They are on the Ile Saint-Louis, staying in a flat belonging to the Prince de Juvigny, a friend, I gather, of Mr. Patterdale."

She started. "What a fool I was not to think he might be there! Of course I ought to have thought of that—I knew that this French prince was a friend of Jim Patterdale's."

He looked at her, and a wry smile zigzagged for a moment over his good-humoured face. The tracking down of the two Englishmen to that remotely situated, if luxurious, flat, had caused him a great deal of trouble. A word from Mrs. Brantwood, and all that trouble would have been spared! However, he kept this annoying thought to himself.

"I've found out something else," he said slowly. "This is, that the Prince is coming back the day before Christmas. That is the day after to-morrow, so the two will have to be gone by then. Now this morning Mr. Patterdale changed five hundred pounds of English money into French notes of all denominations."

She rose from her chair. "Then you think, Monsieur Popeau——?"

"I do not think, I know. From these two facts—the Prince's return and the money having been changed—I can deduce that Mr. Patterdale's attempt on your husband's life is to be made to-night. What is more, I can already assure you that this attempt will be frustrated. I'm in close touch with a man familiar with the Paris underworld, and he has all the threads of this affair in his hands. It has taken me three days to make sure of what is Mr. Patterdale's ingenious plot. I did not make the necessary enquiries from above, but from below. Do you understand? Oddly enough, the only thing I could not find out was where your husband and his so-called friend were staying."

She was staring at him with wide-open eyes. To-night. An attempt on her Jack's life to-night? No wonder she was too agitated, too frightened even to speak.

"Sit down," he said in a kindly tone. "It won't take many moments to make you understand the position. Most fortunately for us, the man whom Americans call 'the janitor' and whom we call the concierge of the old house on the quay where

your husband is now staying, is by no means a reputable character. He is one of those men who, as it was put to me the other day, will do anything for money. Though he is now absolutely respectable, he is still in touch with some of his old evil friends. thing I discovered was that a certain little man who has been in prison, or rather I should say, in and out of prison most of his life—his nickname is Yellowface and he is known to stick at nothing—has been boasting of a great coup he is going to carry off. That man yesterday night was shadowed to the porter's lodge of the house where your husband is staying. To the dwelling-place of the concierge came down Mr. Patterdale to meet Yellowface—a curious acquaintance, truly, for an English gentleman !"

"Was he giving the man money?" she faltered.

"Arranging with him how he should earn his money," said Popeau grimly. "And now, Mrs. Brantwood, I want you to come out with me early this afternoon. I have a key to the flat. We will pay a visit there, while your husband and Mr. Patterdale are out on a motoring expedition."

He saw her face alter; a look of terror came over it.

"Don't be afraid," he said quickly, "there will be no tricks indulged in during that expedition! As a matter of fact, they are taking with them a young lady. She is quite a nice girl, a young singer whom Patterdale, it appears, has known a long time. She is very anxious to appear in musical comedy in London, and Mr. Patterdale has told her that he can give her excellent introductions in the musical world there."

Miranda Brantwood looked at him in surprise as he went on:—"I have ascertained that Patterdale, your husband and the girl are going out this evening to La Mère Gigogne, one of the fashionable cafés where one can dine and then dance. In my view, Mrs. Brantwood, the attempt on your husband's life will be made there this evening, and I cannot help thinking that Patterdale will not make one of the party. I may be wrong, but such is my conviction. I have had thirty years of this kind of work, and once I get on the right track—that naturally is the real difficulty—I can generally tell with mathematical precision what is going to happen. And now, come with me! I have obtained a Perquisition order, for we may find something in the flat which may be of use to us. On the other hand, it is possible we shall find nothing. Even so it is worth making the attempt."

A car was drawn up before the vast perron of the Hotel Paragon, and into it Popeau ushered the English lady with some ceremony. "You know where to go," he said to the chauffeur, and off they started, only to stop a very few moments later before a huge old house, even older than the Hotel Paragon, with a beautiful view of the river—in one of those corners of old Paris where few foreigners penetrate.

Together, the two, the stout Frenchman and the slender Englishwoman, went up the shallow stairs to the first floor. There Hercules Popeau opened the front door of the flat with a latchkey he produced from his capacious shabby leather purse. He waited a moment, listening intently, but there was a curious, heavy silence both within and without.

"My information was correct. Both the day servants have been given a holiday."

"What a delightful place in which to live," said Miranda Brantwood, drawing a long breath.

The hall was hung with fine tapestries, and through a vast window was a lovely view of Notre Dame. They passed into what looked like a painter's studio. There were some splendid pieces of old furniture about, and fine old Italian paintings on the walls.

"Nothing to see here," observed Popeau thoughtfully. "Now we will go into each of the bedrooms." He consulted a plan of the flat and opening a masked door motioned to her to go through it.

"This is Jack's room," exclaimed Mrs. Brantwood, and she touched with a lingering, caressing touch, a rough tweed coat hanging over the back of a chair.

"Ah! so this is the Captain's room? That interests me! Will you go into the Prince's studio while I make a serious search?"

She left the door open, and waited anxiously. All at once she heard him utter an exclamation. "Sapristi! Nous y somme!" he cried.

His companion was far too ignorant of French to know what he meant, but she heard the joyous lilt in the deep, sonorous voice, and wondered what it was he had found.

A moment later he put his head through the door of the bedroom. "I have done good work!" he exclaimed. "But for the present it must remain a secret."

As they went past the porter's lodge Mrs. Brantwood saw that two men in uniform were sitting in the front room, opposite the open door. They sprang to attention.

"You have your instructions?" said

Popeau sharply.

"Mais out, patron!" They grinned, showing their white teeth. Their eyes were bright and eager. She told herself, with a slight shudder, that so dogs look when hunting.

#### III.

LATE that same evening, in the gay surroundings of the famous café dancing-hall known as La Mère Gigogne, Jack Brantwood was acting as unwilling escort to the pretty, vivacious French girl of whom he felt he had already seen too much that day. But Patterdale had caught a chill during their motor expedition to Fontainebleau, and he had begged Brantwood to take his place and give Mademoiselle Carmen "a jolly evening." "She's such a good little sort," he had explained. "Her mother used to take English girls and 'finish' them. My sister was there, otherwise I shouldn't have been allowed to take her out."

Brantwood regretted, now, that he had come on this Paris jaunt. Often he had repented secretly of his foolish quarrel with his wife. But he was too proud to try and

make it up.

All this being so he felt perhaps unreasonably annoyed with this French girl, though she knew English quite well and chattered away in between the dances; from something she said he gathered that she thought him depressed and unhappy. This nettled him. He almost told her once or twice that he needed no sympathy.

The evening wore itself away; the heated smoke-laden room became fuller and fuller; close on midnight a great many more people came in, from the theatres and music-halls,

no doubt.

With relief he heard his companion ask the time of one of the waiters. The man answered: "Minuit, sauf deux minutes." Mademoiselle Carmen turned to Brantwood. "I must be getting home," she exclaimed hurriedly. "My Mamma always stays up for me—Mr. Patterdale knows that well."

She was edging towards the entrance, and she looked uncomfortable, even a little anxious. Truth to tell, she had no idea why Jim Patterdale had told her that she and Brantwood must leave on the very stroke of midnight.

The young Englishman was only too ready to go home, and they were making their way through the crush of incoming people in the vestibule when a most extraordinary thing happened. As they reached the actual entrance, garlanded with artificial ivy, of La Mère Gigogne, for a moment Brantwood and the girl he was escorting were separated. He felt his arms clutched—someone without doubt trying to get at his note-case. While trying to shake himself free, a dwarfish, olive-skinned man grinned up into his face, and—a moment later, he had been dragged clean out of the crowd by two tall, sinewy men! Before he could say a word of protest, one of them bound twice tightly round his mouth and neck a thick silk scarf.

Still held by his captors, he was hustled across the empty street and thrust unceremoniously into a private car; the scarf was unwound from his neck, something was put over his nose and mouth, and he smelt what he knew was the sickly odour of chloroform, before losing consciousness.

While this was occurring in far less seconds than it takes to write, what the French call a bagarre was occurring round the door of

the dancing-hall.

The curious little olive-skinned man had been knocked over, and from his hand there had dropped a revolver; and then, as if by magic, a number of police agents appeared on the scene; they picked up the little man, together with his revolver, and took him off, protesting lustily.

As for Jim Patterdale's young friend, with true French quick-wittedness, she had shaken herself free from the crowd, and had begun walking quickly, in her high-heeled

satin shoes, down a side street.

Soon she heard behind her heavy footsteps. She turned round to see a big man wrapped in a huge coat, and to her amazement, and yes, terror, he called out, addressing her by her real surname, "What have you been doing—you, a respectable girl, to act as decoy for a villain like Patterdale?"

She burst into angry tears. "I don't know what you mean. Mr. Patterdale is an English gentleman. His sister is a friend of mine."

"What did he give you to make Mr. Brantwood leave La Mère Gigogne exactly at midnight?"

She kept her lips obstinately shut.

"Do you want me to take you along to the Violon?" he asked roughly.

At that slang term for the "lock-up" the girl gave a cry of fear.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I think I can tell you what money you were promised
—a fee of five thousand francs, eh?"

"Five thousand francs!" She looked at



"The curious little olive-skinned man had been knocked over, and from his hand there had dropped a revolver."

him in amazement. And then shamefacedly she uttered the words, "One thousand francs." She added, sobbing, "We are very, very poor."

He opened his pocket-book. He held out to a girl a thousand-franc note. "There." he said, "thank the good God this is not blood money. "But who are you?" asked. God you are not accessory to a 'Brantwood had been dragged clean out of the crowd by two tall, sinewy men! One of them bound twice tightly round his mouth and neck a thick silk scarf." murder. By the way, where do you live?" She gave him, trembling, an address. "Very well. My car shall take you there now," and he called "Stop" to the driver of a car which had been following slowly, unnoticed by her, along the quiet, snowy street. "No," she said firmly, "I will walk home." "Nonsense! Here is my card. I am attached to the Prefecture of Police, as you see." He said to the chauffeur, "After you have taken this lady to the address that she will give you, come back and fetch me on the

"Umph! Then that villain is mean and penurious as well as everything else," mutteredPopeau under his breath.

"Never mind who I am. I'm old enough to be your father. almost your grandfather. Thank

Quai Bourbon—you know the place?"

Then he turned on his heel, and after a few moments hailed a taxi.

Patterdale was sitting in the lofty livingroom of his friend, the Prince de Juvigny's flat, when there came a loud rat-a-tat-tat on the fine old knocker of the front door.

He got up and looked at the clock. A quarter past one? Brantwood no doubt had had an envelope on him when . . . he did not finish the sentence, even to himself.

He walked slowly into the hall, and opened the door. Instead of the police agent he expected to see there stood a big man in evening dress. Someone, maybe, who had come to the wrong flat by mistake? But no, there was no mistake, for, "Do I address Mr. Patterdale?" said the Frenchman in very fair English.

"My name is Patterdale——" And then Patterdale waited. He had found it a good rule in life always to let the other chap come on, break cover, as it were, first.

"I have come to tell you, Mr. Patterdale, that the plan you made—shall I call it a plot?—no, that would be melodramatic, has gone wrong," said the stranger suavely. "Every move you have made is known to the French Police, and if you make the slightest attempt to leave Paris before the death of Sir John Brantwood has taken place—according to our information that may happen to-day, or it may not happen for some weeks—then you will be arrested on a charge of attempted murder. In this country that means, on conviction, the galleys."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean also that, when you leave Paris, you will be well advised not to go back to your own country for, let me see, a good year. Every particular of your activities during the last few days has been sent, as a sworn statement, to Scotland Yard. Henceforward you are a marked man. Good night!"

The stranger turned on his heel. Patter-dale staggered back into the room where he had been waiting, or rather pretending to wait, for a man who, well he knew, would never come back. How had the plot which he had reason to think absolutely water-tight come to naught? Who had betrayed him? And who was the big man who had given him, no doubt, sound advice?

## IV.

"Where the devil am I?" Jack Brantwood sat up, not in bed, but on a bed, in a fine panelled bedroom of which the atmosphere struck him as curiously sinister, perhaps

because he could hear no sounds within or without. Was he in Paris? He doubted it. But, truth to tell, he remembered nothing of last night beyond that he had been hustled, first, by a funny-looking little chap, and then by two brawny fellows who, having got him into a car, had evidently chloroformed him. He felt his breast-pocket. There was his note-case, still bulky with notes!

He looked about him. Why, there was a bell! He pressed it hard. Not that he expected it to be answered.

And then there gradually dawned on his ears the roar of traffic, the familiar hoots of taxis not so very far away. Then he was in Paris after all? How anxious his friend Patterdale must be at his non-appearance, indeed at his disappearance!

There came a knock at the door, and a pleasant-faced woman came in. "One little moment, sir," she said in French. Then she walked quickly across the room to a door Brantwood had not noticed was there, and opened it.

"Monsieur Popeau?" she called out,

"the gentleman is awake."

"Awake? I've never been asleep. I was drugged—drugged!" called out Brantwood fiercely.

He jumped off the bed, and stood looking expectantly at the open door. An urbane-looking man, a very big man, though obviously a Frenchman, advanced into the room. He bowed. "Have I the honour of addressing Captain John Brantwood?"

"You have," said the other curtly. "And I demand an explanation of the extraordinary way I've been—"

He stopped abruptly, for, after all, these two people had him in their power, and he had no idea where he was. It was with a feeling of dismay that he saw the man who had just come in walk quickly to the other door, that through which the woman had just disappeared, and turn the key in the lock

"Come into my study, Captain Brantwood. I have something serious to say to you, as well as to give you an explanation of what happened to you last night."

Brantwood followed him, still feeling dazed, and a little sick. What a pleasant room—lined, too, on one side with books—not at all the sort of room one would expect to be that of a villain. But then abroad one never knows!

"I wish to know," he said in a cold,

resentful tone, "to what I owe the amazing way in which I have been treated? I did not think such a thing could happen in a civilised city like Paris—that a man could be gagged when he was leaving a place of amusement—."

"No," said Hercules Popeau, smiling,

"not gagged."

"To all intents and purposes I was gagged! Something was put over my mouth which made it impossible for me to scream out, and then I was lifted into a car and chloroformed. I suppose you won't deny that!"

"No, that I will not deny. But it was

done in your own interest."

The Frenchman had gone behind a wide flat writing-table, and he was moving some papers about as if seeking something.

"In my own interest? How utterly absurd! I came over to Paris three days

ago with a friend, and——"

"Your friend," said Popeau quietly, "had taken the trouble to stay at home last night. What excuse did he give for that?"

"There was no cause for his giving any excuse! He had caught a violent chill.

In fact, I felt anxious about him."

"Not so anxious," said Popeau quietly, "as he felt about you. And he had reason to be, Captain Brantwood, considering the letter you had left in the blotter in your bedroom at the Prince de Juvigny's flat."

"A letter in the blotter of my bedroom? I left nothing at all in the blotter," said

Brantwood in an angry tone.

He was beginning to feel as if he was living

through a nightmare.

"May I show you the letter, written apparently in your handwriting, that was found in your blotter?"

"I shall be very glad to see it!"

"Will you please approach a little nearer?"

Jack Brantwood was a brave man. He had won a bar to his military cross during the War. Even so, he felt a certain tremor as he walked up to where the Frenchman was now standing behind the wide table, and his feeling of discomfort was not allayed when he became aware that close to the other's hand lay a wicked-looking little revolver.

"Now, Captain Brantwood, I've taken the trouble to compare the handwriting of this letter with a specimen of your usual handwriting. Do you still deny that you wrote this letter?" With a touch of eagerness Jack Brantwood held out his hand. Then a look of utter bewilderment filled his good-looking face, for on a piece of notepaper bearing the address at which he and Patterdale had spent the last few days, he read the following words, and he could have sworn that they were in his handwriting!

"For reasons into which I do not care to enter, Patterdale, I have become tired of life. I have been a rolling stone for years, but that has brought me no happiness, and I have made up my mind to and it applies."

end it all to-night.

I'm afraid doing it like this is going to cause you a lot of bother. However, the worry will be over soon, old chap, as this letter will make it perfectly clear that I took my own life deliberately. If the French Johnnies want to know where I got the revolver, you can tell them that I brought it with me from England. I was determined that you shouldn't see it, but I fancy the French dayservant who waited on me must have noticed it in what I call my collar drawer. By the way, give the man a hundred francs. He has carned it.

I am going out for a bit of a spree to-night, and you will find me as likely as not at the Morgue to-morrow morning. My only regret—and I do regret it—is that those cursed moneylenders will soon get double the money they lent to that fool Arthur.

As for you, Patterdale, you've always been a good pal to me, and I beg your pardon for the trouble I'm going to put you to.

Yours ever,

JACK BRANTWOOD.

Given this day in our good city of Paris, December the 23rd."

Brantwood read the extraordinary epistle twice right through. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "Is this a practical joke?" he enquired coldly.

"If so," said Popeau, "it was an expensive practical joke. For your friend Mr. Patterdale paid forty pounds in good English money for that letter. It is the work of one of the most skilful forgers this city, or any other, contains."

The colour drifted from Brantwood's face. "I—I—don't understand," he said falter-

ingly.

Hercules Popeau sat down; he looked up at the fair-haired Englishman who had blanched under his tan.

"If everything had gone according to—do you not say 'Cocker'? I prefer 'Patterdale'—then, Captain Brantwood, this letter would have been produced, let me see? in about two hours from now. And it would have proved to the Paris Police beyond the shadow of a doubt, that you had committed suicide, and with this weapon."

Popeau threw himself back, and held up the wicked-looking little revolver.

"But I've never seen that revolver before," stammered Brantwood.

"I don't suppose you have, though it was supplied by Mr. Patterdale to the apache who was going to use it last night, and who very nearly did make a hole in you. Didn't you notice a little fellow pressing up to you just before two of the four men I had on the job got you? The other two tripped him up, and as he fell he dropped this revolver!"

'—I don't understand." Popeau jumped up. He ran round and drew forward a chair, and Brantwood sank into it. "Do you," he muttered, "mean that I was to have

been-"

"—murdered?" Popeau interjected. " Yes."

The other man stared at him. "But why?" he asked hoarsely. "Why?"

And then Popeau observed in a dry, sharp voice: "Again and again, Captain Brantwood, you've been warned about this man —this unscrupulous villain! As to why he wanted to take your life, though he had no quarrel with you personally, remind yourself of one fact. Your uncle, Sir John Brantwood, is dying. Only your life stands between your friend Patterdale and twelve thousand pounds, his commission on 'business' introduced by him to a certain moneylender. Money goes a long way in the Paris of to-day, and the whole affair would have been done, artistically done, too, for how much? It may surprise you to know for under five hundred pounds of your good gold sterling!"

Brantwood held out his hand. sieur, I owe you my life," he said in a broken

"Nay," said Popeau sharply, "you do not owe your life to me. But I will show you to whom you owe your life. It is to a plucky, fine-natured, loving woman-" His voice broke. "Come over here, Captain Brantwood."

He rose, and taking hold of the other man's arm, he led him round the big writing-table.

He slid back a tiny panel, the curiously named "Judas," which is to be found in so many of the old Paris houses which survive from the eighteenth century. It was situated in the wall just behind the chair where he always sat.

"Look through into that room, and there you will see the human being to whom you owe the fact that you are alive now, this

morning, instead of lying dead."

And what was it that Brantwood saw? Framed in a charming old-world octagon sitting-room, of which the window looked out into a garden, sat the wife from whom he had parted with angry, contemptuous words some months ago, and yet whom he had loved passionately even while he was being so recklessly cruel.

"Miranda?" he exclaimed. And then called loudly again, "Miranda!"

She sprang up from her chair and looked round her in amazement. Where could that beloved voice be coming from ?.

Popeau slid back the little shutter. "Go to her," he cried, "go and tell her-no, not that you are grateful—no woman cares for gratitude! Tell her that you love her, that you are ashamed of having been unkind to her—that in future you will believe her when she warns you against a bandit."

As he spoke he was leading the unresisting Brantwood out of the door and down a corridor.

He opened the sitting-room door and pushed him in. As he did so he said, "I'm going out for a short walk. When I come back I will take you both out to lunch at Foyot's, far the best restaurant on this side of the Seine—and quiet, too!"

But Brantwood did not hear that kindly promise. With a yearning cry of "Darling -darling!" he ran forward, and a moment later his wife was in his arms.



# A PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

# By RALPH DURAND

● ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE ●

ANY volumes could be written about what a Briton sees in his mind when he speaks of Home. To one it means a heather-purple moor outlined against a stormy sea; to another, Piccadilly Circus and the theatres near it; to another, the word brings memories of hedged fields and a plough-team plodding slowly along a furrow; to a fourth, naphtha lights dancing on costermongers' barrows in the Old Kent Road on a Saturday night.

When his fellow-passengers called Peter Darrell to come on deck and get his first glimpse of Old England, he shivered and went below again. The sight of Beachy Head looming through grey murk gave him For six years Home to him had meant the place where Winifred Neville was. Then she had come out to Megobaniland to marry him. But on the eve of what was to have been their wedding day, for some reason that he had never been able to understand, she had broken off her engagement. She was still in Central Africa, helping the missionary who had a station in his district, and he, because a lion had mauled him and the Megobaniland Medical Officer had insisted on his taking a year's leave, was bound for Ilchester. It seemed the most obvious place in which to spend the year of idleness to which he was condemned, because he had been born there, his father still lived there. and he knew he would find it full of bittersweet memories of Winnie. But already he longed to be back among the Wanazoa, the people who had known no law save that of their despot chiefs until he had established himself among them and ruled them in the name of the Great White King.

The flutter of excitement which attended Peter's return to the vicarage where he had been born did not last long. His mother was dead, his brothers had gone out into the world and become absorbed in their own

affairs, and his father had got into a groove of settled habits in which Peter had no With the passing of the years the old man's interests had narrowed down till they included only the routine of his duties. the everyday affairs of his parishioners, and the welfare of his garden. During those same years Peter had so utterly lost touch with Ilchester affairs that the choice of a Secretary for the local Mothers' Union interested him no more than Wanazoa politics interested old Mr. Darrell. Father and son found that they had so little in common that they seldom met except at meal-times. Even then conversation dragged. The old man's fingers would be itching to open the seedsman's catalogues that the latest post had brought, and the young one's thoughts would be concerned with speculations as to whether his black subjects were behaving themselves in his absence and whether their last harvest was a good one. It was an important question, for the Wanazoa were improvident folk. If their harvest were poor, preparations must be made for famine. On the other hand, if it were good they made all their surplus grain into beer, and beer-drinking led invariably to faction-fighting.

Outside the vicarage, Peter's return did not so much as ruffle the calm of the old cathedral town. A few schoolboys showed a brief tendency to hero-worship him because he had been living among savages; and anxious mothers with indolent sons to get rid of consulted him as to whether reliance could be placed on advertisements which represented orange-growing in Cape Colony as a profitable industry which required little capital, less labour and still less experience. He told the mothers that as he lived six weeks' journey away from the Cape he knew no more about Cape Colony than he knew about Constantinople. He did his best to satisfy the schoolboys' demands for

accounts of his adventures, but they lost interest when they learned that, instead of making it his daily practice to kill savages, his principal care had been to restrain them from killing each other. He then subsided into the place which Ilchester society assigned to him, and that place, because he knew none of the new dance-steps, did not play bridge, and refused a walking-on part in a play that the Amateur Dramatic Club was rehearsing, was a lonely one. Few of those whom he met at afternoon tea-tables could have found Megobaniland on the map, and none of them were in the least interested in such administrative problems as how to stamp out witchcraft and human sacrifice, and how to encourage cotton-growing among a people who considered cattle-raiding as the only form of labour fit for a man who takes a pride in himself.

This indifference to subjects that he considered so important irritated Peter Darrell. His life on the outermost fringe of the Empire, where he had scarcely ever seen a white face or had an opportunity of speaking his mother-tongue, had robbed him of a sense of proportion. In Megobaniland he had been supreme lord over a quarter of a million people. In Ilchester, to people who had known him when he wore a sailor's suit and trundled a hoop, he was only "one of old Mr. Darrell's sons, the one who had to go abroad because he couldn't pass his Little-Go," and the general opinion of these was that his years of exile had made him even stupider than before.

A new problem confronted Peter as he came down to breakfast every morninghow to fill the hours that must pass before it would be time to go to bed again. He took lessons in golf, but with little profit, for he paid such anxious attention to the professional's directions as to how to stand and how to hold his club that he had none to spare for the hitting of the ball, which he had supposed, apparently erroneously, to be the chief object of the game. The professional, misjudging his age by the greyness of his hair and the lines that responsibility had traced on his face, told him that he ought to have started the game earlier if he wanted to be a player.

He rejoined the Ilchester Tennis and Croquet Club, but with little more profit. Before he went out to Central Africa he had been rather hot stuff at tennis, but he was disappointed to find that through lack of practice his game was now barely lukewarm, and that, during the years in which he had never had a racquet in his hand, the average player's game had become so fast that it seemed impossible to catch up to it. No one encouraged him to make the attempt. Players who took the game seriously did not conceal their anxiety to avoid having him for a partner.

Even the croquet-players did not welcome Politely but quite firmly they made him understand that though croquet does not require excessive energy, it demands of its players skill, knowledge, finesse and especially brains. Yet Peter spent much of his time at the courts. His subscription entitled him to afternoon tea, and he found it more amusing to sit and watch others play than to go for lonely walks along roads that were monotonously like each other. As the weeks went by he found his thoughts tend more and more to centre on his meals, not because he had much appetite, but because meals were definite events in otherwise uneventful days.

Elderly non-playing members talked to him at the Tennis Club, but whenever the conversation passed beyond such opening stages as the weather and the condition of the ground he found it difficult to take his share in it. He had arrived in England at a time when a general election seemed imminent, and he was so crassly ignorant of party politics that it took him some time to learn which party was in power, and still more to understand why it was of the utmost importance, as most Ilchester people seemed to think, to keep it in office. To overcome his ignorance on the subject he made a practice of conscientiously reading the reports of the debates in the House of Commons and of trying to get enthusiastic over such subjects as the Poor Law Emergency Provisions (Scotland) Bill. So far as he understood the arguments advanced from both sides of the House they all seemed so excellent that he could not see either that any change of Government was needed or that it would do any harm if it took place. A choleric elderly colonel was explaining his error to him one afternoon and trying to make him understand that if the Opposition came into power the downfall of the British Empire would inevitably ensue, when a nonplaying lady member bore down on them. The colonel broke off his remarks in the middle of a sentence. "Can't stand that cackling old hen," he muttered and shuffled off to another part of the ground.

Colonel Yates's expression was rude but not wholly unjustified. Mrs. Thurlby's voice was not musical and much practice on public platforms had induced in her the habit of raising it to an extent that the importance of her subject did not always warrant.

"Tell me all about the dear Africans," she

demanded.

Darrell rejoiced at the opportunity of turning from home politics to a subject of which he really knew something. Eagerly he began to enlarge a line of thought that had been occupying his mind at the moment when Colonel Yates had joined him.

"They are topping good fellows on the whole," he said warmly, "and those who are readiest to eat you on first acquaintance are just the ones who will most cheerfully die for you. Of course they aren't all cannibals. I believe there is little cannibalism, if any, in my own district. All my people are cattle-breeders, and I have a theory that cannibalism is common only among tribes that live in forest country, where cattle can't be reared and there is no game to hunt. You know, there's a lot to be said for cannibals! Livingstone discovered that natives can thrive without meat if they can get salt, or do without salt if they can get meat, but get all sorts of beastly diseases if they can't get either. Now I expect that if you yourself had been brought up to think it no sin to kill your neighbour, and had a hankering for meat of some kind, you would be a cannibal too!"

As Mrs. Thurlby had not had Darrell's training in the art of regarding ethical matters from a black man's point of view, she would probably have felt herself grievously insulted by the suggestion. But she was not listening. She had specialised so much as a talker that she was a very bad listener, and though she contrived to wear an air of polite attention her thoughts were fixed on what she was going to say as soon as Darrell gave

her the opportunity.

"How interesting!" she said vaguely when he paused for her comment. "And dear Livingstone, too. You mentioned him, didn't you? Now, Mr. Darrell, I want you to do something for me. A man is coming down here to lecture next Thursday week and I want you on the platform. I shall take the chair and I want you to move the vote of thanks. It doesn't matter at all that you aren't accustomed to public speaking. Just a few words will be enough. The fewer the better, in fact. I shall do all the talking that is really necessary and I will tell you just what I want you to say."

Darrell smiled at the suggestion that he

was not accustomed to public speaking. But the audiences that he had often addressed were not such as Mrs. Thurlby had in mind. In Megobaniland, whenever he wished to promulgate an ordinance that he had made, he summoned all the chief men to his court to hear it, and began his speech with the words: "Listen, chiefs and headmen of the Wanazoa! This is my order."

"What do you want me to say?" he asked.

"It is really only your presence on the platform that I want, because everybody knows that you have been in Africa, and in any case I shall tell them that you have. All I want you to say is just a few words about the importance of missionary work in Africa."

Again Darrell rejoiced at the chance of talking on a subject to which he had given a

great deal of thought.

"I'll do that with the greatest pleasure. You'll hear fellows say that missionaries do a lot of harm. That's all rot. It's true that niggers who come under the influence of the wrong sort of white man lose all that's good in native standards of morals without getting another standard to take its place, and the poor missionary gets the blame. The sort of missionary that does a lot of harm is——"

But Mrs. Thurlby was not in the least interested in Darrell's personal views on the

subject.

"The man who is going to lecture is such a splendid fellow," she interrupted. "He has been out in Africa for only a little more than a year and he has already converted

over a hundred poor savages."

"Through an interpreter, I suppose," said Darrell contemptuously. "I'll bet he hasn't converted one! Until a man knows the language thoroughly he can't begin to understand what is at the back of the African's mind—and it'll take him more than a year to do that. Your man had better go back to Africa and spend the next ten years in converting those hundred poor savages all over again. He's the sort of missionary who brings discredit on missionary work!"

Mrs. Thurlby bristled.

"And why, may I ask, should you suppose that he has not done what he says he has done?"

"Because until a man understands the African he can't hope to teach him anything, and the best man going in so short a time could no more teach a raw African even the

elements of Christianity than he could stuff the contents of a cabin trunk into a handbag. Now I know a missionary who has converted only three Africans in ten years. He's the sort to support, the sort that builds on solid foundations. Whereas your friend-"

"My friend," said Mrs. Thurlby, "says quite definitely that he has converted more than a hundred African savages. He has even given their names in the Quarterly

Report."

"I dare say he thinks he has," said Dar-"He probably does not yet know enough about the country to realise that an African will pretend to believe anything a white man chooses to tell him. It's his idea of good manners."

Mrs. Thurlby rose from her seat with an air intended to convey her opinion that

Darrell was a ribald scoffer.

"I never listen to an argument of that kind," she said.

"It isn't an argument," protested Darrell. "It's a fact." But he made his protest to her back as she stalked away.

After the failure of his one chance to talk about things that interested him he felt lonelier than ever. He had a fit of depression whenever he remembered that he still had many months of leave to get through. And Ilchester, haunted with memories of Winnie, seemed the worst place in which to spend them. There was a particular pew in the cathedral where he often sat for an hour at a time recalling days when instead of listening to the sermon he had watched the light from a stained-glass window play on her dear head. His visits to the spot made him so dejected that he always resolved never to go there again, and at last he decided that the only means of keeping away from it was to go away from Ilchester altogetherto London or Scotland or Southend-on-Sea, any place that would not remind him hourly of the girl who had passed out of his life.

On a day of driving rain, when the damp chill set throbbing the scars on his shoulder that the lion's teeth had made, he braced himself to go, and as a preliminary stowed into packing-cases the native curios that from time to time he had sent home. He had had the mistaken idea that his father would like to decorate the vicarage hall with African spears, battle-axes and feather headdresses, and to adorn the drawing-room with baskets of woven grass and specimens of native beadwork and musical instruments. But as far back as the days when Peter had worn knickerbockers everything in the vicarage—the chipped tobacco jar emblazoned with a college crest on the study mantelpiece and a faded photograph of the Jungfrau, a souvenir of his parents' honeymoon, in the dining-room—had had its appointed place from which it might on no account be moved. In the opinion of the cook-housekeeper there was enough rubbish in the house already without them heathen things of Master Peter's, and in consequence they had at last been carried to the attic on the flood-tide of an annual spring-cleaning. As he packed them they spoke to him of the great untamed, unhedged spaces of Megobaniland, of the songs that the herd-boys crooned as they drove the cattle home at sunset, of the rhythmic beat of drums resounding through the long cool nights at harvest-time.

On the following day he took them to the British Museum.

"Take any of them you like," he said to the Keeper of the Ethnological Gallery, " and I'll give what you don't want to the shop outside where they sell this sort of thing."

The Keeper of the Ethnological Gallery did not want any of the things that Darrell offered him. His most pressing need was space in which to exhibit the thousands of articles that were already under his care. But he tactfully took the sting out of his refusal by inviting Darrell to walk round the gallery with him and look at the collection of Central African objects.

It took no more than three minutes for Darrell to discover that here at last was a man who could find Megobaniland on the map. Joyfully he unleashed his tongue. But in a very short while he was content to listen instead of talk, for he discovered that the Keeper of the Ethnological Gallery, though he had never left England, knew very much more about the Central African native than himself, and was able to explain much concerning native beliefs, customs and superstitions that he had only partially understood.

"I wish you would come and dine with me somewhere," said Darrell eagerly when a bell rang to announce that it was closingtime. "I haven't enjoyed a talk so much since I don't know when."

"Sorry," said the Keeper. "I'm on duty at home. I've got to play cricket with my kids. But look here. I'll give you a card to Dearing. You've heard of him, I suppose? No? Well, go and look him up. He'll be glad to see you, and what he doesn't know about Central Africa wouldn't fill a

jam-pot."

The address on the card given him led Darrell next morning to a studio over a mews and to a man who, until he read the name on the card, did not show any pleasure at all at being interrupted at his work.

"How?" asked Darrell. "I don't understand."

"How should you? You've work enough of your own to do. Fellows at your job break the road for me and my pals. Do you know anything about trypanosomes?"

"No. What are they? Or is it a

place?"



"'You mustn't expect the British Government to sanction anything of the kind. It will look too much like filibustering.'"

"So you like your work in Africa?" he said, after a few skirmishing remarks. "That's good. Fill your pipe and let's talk." He pointed to a microscope into which he had been peering when Darrell disturbed him. "Our ancestors used to spread their dominion with the sword; but we are going to conquer Africa with that,"

Dearing laughed.

"I'll try and talk in words of one syllable. Disease is the African's enemy. He is usually born with chronic malaria. He may shake it off if he lives to manhood, but even then he has a whole host of other diseases to choose from—sleeping-sickness, yaws, kala-azar, amœbic dysentery, blackwater, dozens of 'em—and if he doesn't get one he gets

another. His whole life is one long fight against the disease germs that swarm in his blood. As you know, an African kiddie up to about ten years old is pretty well as intelligent as a white kid, but soon after he reaches that age the fight begins to take up so much of his energies that he has none left for developing his brain and he becomes the thick-headed dolt that no doubt has so often tried your patience. We are out to alter all It's a long job. It's rather like emptying the Serpentine with a saltspoon. But give us time enough—say a couple of centuries—and money enough—say a thousand million pounds—and we'll do it."

"But how?"

" First the microscope shows us the disease germ in a man's blood. When we have discovered it we set to work to find out how it gets there. As you know, mosquitoes carry the malaria germ and tsetse-flies the sleeping-sickness germ. If it's an insect that carries the germ we've next got to kill it. That's where the money is needed. It isn't as easy to exterminate little creatures like mosquitoes and ticks as it is to exterminate lions and elephants. But it can be done. The Panama Canal couldn't be dug until the mosquitoes in the neighbourhood were wiped There is no reason on earth why what has been done in Panama shouldn't be done all over Africa."

"It's a long job," said Darrell.

"And a slow job. There are so many blind alleys we have to explore. Ross worked for five years without any success at all before he secured a conviction against the mosquito. And it's a costly job. average civilised man doesn't invest capital in a venture that isn't going to pay dividends till a couple of hundred years after he is I'm just back from three years' work in an African forest where I have been trying to find out why all the niggers who live in it suffer from anæmia. I've come home to cadge money to carry on with. Before I went out last time a wealthy old lady gave me a fiver towards my expenses. I tried to stick her for another the other day, but she wouldn't cough up so much as a tanner when I had to admit that so far I had no results to show for my work. I believe the dear old thing thought that I had gone on the spree with her money."
"I know," said Darrell. "Or at any rate

I can guess. But you make me feel an awful ass. I've felt pretty sick sometimes because no one was interested in my pet ideas. But you—your work is so infinitely bigger and

finer than mine—you have good reason to grouse if you can't get people to back you. And I at any rate see some result of my work, such as when I realise that my people can now go singly and unarmed where they used to go in peril of their lives. My work is in healthy country. Yours is in a beastly dismal forest. And I suppose that at any time you are liable to get one or other of the diseases you investigate?"

"Naturally. The germs aren't going to let me have a monopoly of killing. But that's enough about my work, tell me about

yours."

The two lunched together and dined together and talked about what they were doing, and what they hoped to do, and what might be done for the benefit of unborn generations of Africans, and of the cities that might take the place of swamps when disease had been driven out of the country, and when they parted for the night day was almost at hand.

Next morning, fired with a new idea and a strengthened ideal, Darrell went to Whitehall, and after being bandied from one commissionaire to another, and being kept waiting for half an hour, was at last ushered into the presence of the Permanent Official in whose special care lay the affairs of

Megobaniland.

"I want you to let me have a Medical Board," said Darrell eagerly. "I'm quite fit enough, I think. It's now nearly four months since I got hurt, the sea voyage home did me no end of good and the voyage out again ought to finish the cure all right. want to get back to my job. I don't know if anyone is looking after my district, as I know that the Commissioner is short-handed, and if he hasn't been able to find someone to send there I'm afraid that the Wanazoa may be getting a bit out of hand. Besides, I can't stick doing nothing here while there's so much to be done out there."

The Permanent Official looked at Darrell

somewhat coldly.

"You have chosen an awkward time to ask for a Board," he said. "It's a pity you did not ask for it a week or two ago."

" Why?"

The Permanent Official opened a file and took from it a newspaper cutting.

"D'you know a rag of a paper called The Scourge?" he asked.

"No. I don't read newspapers much."

"It's a paper that panders to the desire of the irresponsible class to read abuse of the responsible class. The irresponsible class being very much in the majority, it has attained so large a circulation that it can well afford the cost of libel actions among its ordinary current expenses. Read that."

Darrell took the cutting and read:

# PERSONALITIES PILLORIED VII

## TIN-POT TYRANTS

A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

The toil-worn millions of this country are clamouring with no uncertain voice for restriction of extravagance in the public services. So loud is the cry that the Opposition, if, as seems likely, it shortly comes into power, will be pledged to a drastic revision of expenditure, and even if the existing Government remains in office the cry of the hard-pressed taxpayer can no longer pass unheeded. Scourge does not greatly care which party reigns in Whitehall. Honest government is all it asks, but it demands that the brake be put on a system by which lavish salaries are paid to such men as the subject of this week's Pillory, a certain Mr. Darrell, Collector of the Wanazoa District of British Megobaniland. Megobaniland is that part of Africa that has most recently come under the oppressive heel of the British Imperialist. The Scourge always has denounced and always will denounce the exploitation of helpless subject races, but it is anxious to be fair and always gladly welcomes any opportunity, though such opportunities come rarely, of awarding praise where it can to those who control the destinies of our black brothers in Africa or elsewhere. It heartily applauds therefore the decision, arrived at rather more than a year ago by the Colonial Office, that in view of the prevalence in Megobaniland of the dread disease of small-pox its native inhabitants should be vaccinated. Though somewhat tardily arrived at it was a statesman-like and, we gladly admit, a humane idea and the plan devised for carrying it out showed unusual care for and insight into native susceptibilities. If white doctors had been sent out to vaccinate the Megobanilanders those simple children of nature might well have suspected the operation of being some new form of tyranny. They the operation of being some new form of tyranny. would, the Colonial Office wisely reasoned, be less likely to fall into that not unnatural error, if they received vaccination at the hands of men of their own race. Coloured but well qualified West Indian doctors were therefore selected for the task.

So far so good! But did the Megobaniland officials, as their duty demanded and their natural humanity should have dictated, do everything in their power to make the plan a success? The Scourge has a very different tale to

Samuel Wilberforce, a native of Barbados and a Bachelor of Medicine of the University of Aberdeen, was one of the negro doctors appointed by the Colonial Office to ply his lancet on the arms of the Megobanilanders. Before he set out he was invited by *The Scourge* to send it frank and fearless reports on the Megobaniland system of administration. This he did and *The Scourge* is therefore enabled to make a disclosure which we trust will make to burn the ears of a tin-pot tyrant, the Mr. Darrell aforesaid.

On arrival in Megobaniland Samuel Wilberforce was assigned to the Wanazoa District over which this Mr. Darrell rules as Collector. The Scourge has been unable to get any satisfactory information as to what qualifications, apart from brazen effrontery, Mr. Darrell possesses for the responsible task of government, but it would have supposed that even a mcre tyro in the art of administration would have welcomed Mr. Wilberforce and have done all in his power to make his humane mission a success. But what are the facts? As a Medical Officer and a Government Official Mr. Wilberforce was clearly entitled to be housed in Government quarters, but the Collector, though himself enjoying the use of a large and comfortable house, assigned to his use a squalid native hut, infested with rats and no doubt other still more obnoxious vermin, which he had to share with a broody hen. As if this insult was not sufficiently pointed, Mr. Darrell deliberately humiliated Mr. Wilberforce, when the two appeared in public together, by making him sit on a lower seat than himself. Were

these insults, to which Mr. Wilberforce was subjected because his skin happened to be of the same colour as that of the subject race, all that we have to record, we could dismiss the matter after pointing the moral that a man so obsessed by colour prejudice is obviously unfit for the task of governing a coloured people. But rudeness almost brutal in its offensiveness is the least important of Mr. Darrell's offences that we have to recall. Instead of endeavouring to secure the success of Mr. Wilberforce's mission, the Collector expressed open hostility to it, actually declaring his opinion-we quote his exact words recorded by Mr. Wilberforce within an hour of their being spoken—that the Colonial Office "should have had more sense" than to send Mr. Wilberforce on his mission. Though Mr. Wilberforce had received explicit instructions to vaccinate every applicant, the Collector used his arbitrary power to confine his ministrations to those whom he wished to reward or with whom he wished to curry favour; and when Mr. Wilberforce, as his duty to the Collector's superior officers demanded, sought to oppose Mr. Darrell's tyrannical will, this tin-pot tyrant deprived him of his interpreter and actually threatened to make the doctor a prisoner and set him to hard labour with the savages in his chain-gang !

Some may be so lacking in imagination as to see in our Pillory only one isolated specimen of an inefficient official, callously indifferent to the welfare of those over whom he is set to rule. But when it is realised that the acts of British officials in such remote parts of Africa as Megobaniland seldom come under the scrutiny of public opinion, that the people they govern have no means of ventilating their grievances or of appealing against tyrannical oppression, the thought of the injustices, unseen and unknown, that they have the power to perpetrate must sicken the heart of all who have at heart the welfare of Africa's oppressed millions.

In placing our readers abreast of our information we call on them to demand that the first economy to be made by the present or the future Government should be drastic reduction in the expenditure of public money in the exploitation, for the benefit of a few planters and traders, of countries like Megobaniland, and the ruthless sacking of tin-pot tyrants such as the subject of this week's Pillory.

Darrell read the article twice—not without wincing—and handed back the newspaper cutting.

"It's grossly distorted and misleading," he said, "but so far as it relates to myself the bare statement of facts is true enough. At the time when that man Wilberforce was sent out to me the Wanazoa were difficult to handle. They were crazy with fear and with hate of me because we were in the middle of a bad famine and they had got it into their thick heads that I could bring rain if I chose. With only twelve armed native soldiers to support my authority I had nothing but my prestige as a white man to go on: that is why I could not treat a negro doctor as an equal. I agree with the writer of that article that the Wanazoa were likely to regard vaccination as a form of tyranny; that is why, as they regarded me during the famine as an absolutely callous tyrant, I pretended to allow only the best behaved men to be vaccinated. Everything went like a house on fire until that fool Wilberforce started making speeches about wanting to vaccinate everyone indiscriminately. That is why I took away his interpreter—when the people heard him they were scared so stiff that they very nearly broke out into open



"'I don't mind resigning if that's what you want, said Darrell wearily. 'I have no further use for the club,"

rebellion on the spot—and threatened to shove him into the chain-gang."

"And did you tell Wilberforce that whoever sent him out to you ought to have had more sense?"

"Yes, I did. I ought not to have said it, of course, but I was so worried at the time that I'd have been rude to the Archbishop of Canterbury himself if he had interfered with me."

The Permanent Official smiled.

"I happen to be the official responsible for sending Wilberforce out to you. That doesn't make any odds, of course. I'm accustomed to abuse. But I'll explain why the publication of that article makes it inexpedient to let you go back to Megobani-

land just now. A question based on that article is going to be asked in the House and all the Colonial Secretary will be able to answer is that he will institute inquiries into your conduct. It's unlikely that the public will let it go at that. The demand for economy in the public service is becoming so strong that whether this Government remains in power or the Opposition comes into office something will have to be done in the direction of reducing expenditure.

"The Colonial Secretary is not the man to take much notice of the sort of muck that *The Scourge* publishes, especially an article that is so obviously a party manœuvre, but he has got to look round for some officials to get rid of and it is only just that



"'I'm not sure that you can be permitted to resign,' persisted Mrs. Thurlby in ringing tones. . . . 'I believe that it is our duty to expel you from the club.'"

the axe should fall on a man who on the face of it seems the headstrong, self-opinionated sort who prefers running his own show to obeying orders from headquarters, just the sort that is liable in emergency to create serious trouble, not at all the sort of man to be left in a remote district where his superior officers can't keep a close eye on him. You see my point, don't you?"

Darrell was obliged to admit that he did see the point. It upset him so much that it did not occur to him to cite in his own defence the somewhat remarkable fact that he had brought one of the most turbulent tribes in Africa into subjection and ruled them for nearly six years without ever firing a shot or causing a shot to be fired in his own defence.

"The present Colonial Secretary won't want to leave any dirty linen for his successor to wash. If we let you go back to your job before your leave is expired it would look as if both you and he shirk inquiry. You do see my point, don't you?"

Darrell nodded gloomily.

"Another point is that up till now your district in Megobaniland has cost the tax-payer more than it has been worth. Of course no one who knows anything about it is going to blame you for that. One can't expect people like the Wanazoa, who were in a state of chronic war until six years ago, to start cultivating cotton for barter for

manufactured articles all at once. man with the vote, clamouring for economy, will blame you, and it is he who has to be appeased. That being the case, even if you aren't axed when your sick leave is up, you won't be sent back to your old district—a job will be found for you somewhere else, on the Gold Coast perhaps or Nigeria."

"But I shouldn't be any use there-I shouldn't know the language or the customs of the people or anything. Why shouldn't I go back to the Wanazoa—people whom I know and who know me?"

"Because in the interests of economy your district in Megobaniland is going to be abandoned and the Wanazoa left to their

own devices again."

"But you can't do that," said Darrell earnestly. "The most appalling bloodshed would break out again. Until I took over the district the Wanazoa used every year to raid the Akapolc—that's another tribe in my district—and carry off their women and cattle. The poor wretches used to hide their kraals in almost inaccessible parts of the mountains. When I put a stop to the raiding I persuaded them to rebuild their kraals on more fertile land in the valleys. If my district is abandoned it won't be long before the Wanazoa raid them again. You can't let the Akapolo down."

The Permanent Official shrugged his shoulders.

"It's unfortunate, of course. But they won't be any worse off than they were before

you took them under your wing."

"Yes, they will. In the old days they used to hide in caves and crannies and on the mountain tops when their scouts reported that the Wanazoa were coming. Now that they are down in the valleys the Wanazoa will be able to wipe them out they won't stand a dog's chance. Besides, I promised the Akapolo on the faith of the British Government that they should be protected as long as the British Government

"But, you see, so far as they are concerned, the British Government isn't going to endure," said the Permanent Official cynically. "Don't think that I don't appreciate your point of view. I do. But we don't know who the next Colonial Secretary will be and the question is whether he will feel himself bound to go on spending money in defending an obscure African tribe because of the promise of an official whom he has never heard of. Consider his diffi-He, just as much as you and I, is

the servant of the man who puts his cross on a voting paper, and if that man puts him into office on the distinct understanding that he has got to economise——'' The Permanent Official shrugged his shoulders "Well, there you are, you see."

"Doesn't the honour of the British Government count for anything?" de-

manded Darrell hotly.

"The honour of a composite body like a Government is always of a lower standard than that of its individual members. man can afford to be Quixotic if no one but himself is concerned; a Cabinet Minister There is no more to be said."

The Permanent Official rose to his feet. Darrell did not take the hint that the interview was over. He sat staring at the patch of carpet between his feet, stunned by the shock of being told that all he had tried to do had been done for nothing. He remembered the kraal of Matipa, the paramount chief, as he had seen it on the first day of his government of the Wanazoa, the soil of the boma black with clotted human blood. the vultures pecking at the heads of the slain that crowned the posts of the stockade. knew that unless he or another white man in his place continued to rule the Wanazoa they would quickly fall back into the slough from which he had laboured so hard to drag them. At last he rose and gave himself a slight shake, as if bracing himself to face the future.

"That ends my career, then," he said. "I have done with Government service. If the promise I made to the Akapolo isn't binding on the Government, it is binding on I'm going back to the Wanazoa. I don't know if they will obey me when I no longer have a bodyguard of King's African Rifles to enforce my orders and the power of the Great White King to back me. But if they won't obey me they can kill me. It'll be all one to me. I shall have done my best to keep faith."

"Do you mean that you intend to go and make yourself a sort of paramount chief in what used to be your district?" asked the Permanent Official. "You mustn't expect the British Government to sanction anything of the kind. It will look too much like

filibustering."

"I don't care two pins what it looks like," said Darrell bitterly, "and I haven't any use for a Government that breaks its word."

As he walked to a shipping office to book a passage by the next African-bound steamer, Darrell was so dazed with the blow that had fallen on him that he more than once unintentionally jostled people who had as much right to the pavement as himself. He was too angry to apologise. In his eyes they were people who knew little and cared less about what such men as himself did and hoped to do in Central Africa, people who cared more for national economy than for national honour.

He was a little calmer by the time that he was in the train on his way back to Ilchester, but not calm enough to listen politely to a fellow-passenger who wanted him to share her indignation against the judges at the Ilchester Flower Show because they had awarded to a rival's sweet-peas a prize that she considered ought to have been given to her own. He wanted to examine the project that he had so suddenly formed and see if it were feasible. He had to go back to the Wanazoa, to announce to them that they were no longer subjects of the British Empire, and to tell them that in future they were to regard him as their king. Would they obey him? He believed they would. Though every law he had enacted for their government had been promulgated in the name of the Great White King, he knew that this must have been to them a somewhat meaningless formula. It was not the King he served but himself that they had obeyed. It would be necessary to organise some sort of armed force to take the place of the King's African Riflemen who had been his bodyguard, men who would police the country under his orders. And these men would have to be paid. It would be necessary to impose a tax of some kind. thought brought him face to face with the problem of how when he no longer received a salary he himself was to live and support the barbaric state that the position he meant to assume would necessitate. His salary would continue until the period of his sick leave had expired. When that was spent he must fall back on his savings. And afterwards? For the first time since it had happened Darrell felt thankful that Winifred had broken off their engagement. His future seemed too uncertain for there to be any room in it for a wife.

He was met on the threshold of the vicarage by his father's elderly cook-housekeeper, a woman who having bathed him and spanked him and made rock-cakes for him when he was a child, had no respect whatever for the Collector of the Wanazoa District of Megobaniland, but a very great love for Master Peter.

"I got your telegram saying as you was coming back," she said, smiling mysteriously, "and I believe there's a bit of good luck coming to you. There's someone waiting to see you in the drawing-room, a lady as I wouldn't be surprised but what you'll be glad to see. But since she came that Mrs. Thurlby and some gentlemen came and said they wanted to see you most important. I put them into the dining-room, and if you take my advice you'll go and get rid of them first of all."

Peter could not think of any lady in all England that he at all wished to see, but he hung up his hat, and following the cookhousekeeper's advice, went into the diningroom. There he found Mrs. Thurlby, looking very aggressive, and four elderly gentlemen who looked as if they heartily wished themselves elsewhere. One of these, the Colonel Yates who had made invidious comparison between Mrs. Thurlby and a harmless and most useful bird, offered his hand, but the other three avoided his eye and affected to be much interested in the faded photograph of the Jungfrau.

"Be seated, Mr. Darrell," said Mrs. Thurlby majestically. "We represent the Committee of the Ilchester Tennis Club."

"The rest of the Committee haven't been consulted in the matter," corrected Colonel Yates. "We don't represent anyone but ourselves. Keep a stiff upper lip, my boy. I'll see you through."

"At any rate we are all members of the Committee," persisted Mrs. Thurlby. "Mr. Darrell, have you seen an article about yourself in the latest number of *The Scourge*?"

"Yes," said Peter apathetically. "I've seen it."

Mrs. Thurlby sat back in her chair and folded her arms.

"We should like an explanation of it," she said in a tone which showed that she was thoroughly enjoying herself. "In the first place we want to know whether the charges brought against you are true."

"Oh, yes. They are true enough after a fashion."

"We should like an explanation, please." Colonel Yates muttered into his moustache something only partly audible about people minding their own confounded business.

"I don't know that it is much use to try and explain," said Darrell. "I doubt if you would understand."

"Perhaps my intelligence is not of so low an order as you seem to suppose," snorted Mrs. Thurlby. "When that fellow Wilberforce came into my district," said Darrell, "my people were half crazy with hunger and fear because they were in the thick of a bad famine. They were furious with me because I would not let them accuse all the friendless old men and women in the tribe of witchcraft and would not allow them to be tortured wholesale for driving away the rain. They were on the point of rebellion, and Wilberforce complicated matters by trying to undermine my authority. I think that is all there is to explain."

"You ought to have stood him against a wall and shot him," said Colonel Yates. "When you are dealing with savages a bullet in time sometimes saves having to call out

machine-guns."

"I am not satisfied," said Mrs. Thurlby.
"We represent the Ilchester Tennis Club, and every club has the right to expel a member guilty of conduct unbecoming a gentleman."

"Rats!" exclaimed Colonel Yates.

"I don't mind resigning if that's what you want," said Darrell wearily. "I have no further use for the club. I am going back to Africa at once, and it's on the cards that

I shall never come home again."

"I'm not sure that you can be permitted to resign," persisted Mrs. Thurlby in ringing tones that must have been heard in the drawing-room in spite of the two closed doors that intervened. "I believe that it is our duty to expel you from the club. It isn't only on that article in The Scourge that I base my opinion. Six months ago Canon Neville's niece went out to Africa to marry The next thing we heard was that she had arrived at what was to have been her future home but had broken off the engagement. A girl does not break off her engagement without a very good reason. Why did That's what I want to know." she do it?

The door opened and Winifred Neville entered the room. She seated herself on Darrell's right and put her arm through his so that he could hardly fail to see that the engagement ring he had given her was restored to its proper place.

"I will tell you why I broke off my

Thurlby," she said. engagement, Mrs. "When I got out to Megobaniland the Commissioner's wife made it very clear to me that it would be my duty to serve my husband to the uttermost, because his life was devoted to serving to the uttermost the people whom he governed, people more degraded, Mrs. Thurlby, than you can imagine, yet with some feelings, perhaps, finer than you could appreciate. I may tell you that when those people heard that I was coming home a deputation of chiefs came to me to urge me to entreat Peter to come back to them, and the paramount chief whom Peter had deposed said: 'We watch across the lake every day for his return because since he left us clouds have covered the face of the sun.' When first I realised how much I should have to sacrifice I had not the courage to face a future among them. But after living awhile among the missionaries in Peter's district I became infected with their ideals. For that reason I have come home—I reached Plymouth this morning—to ask Peter to forget that once I shirked. And now that you have had your answer, perhaps you wouldn't mind going. Open the door for Mrs. Thurlby, Peter."

Peter obeyed mechanically. Mrs. Thurlby glared, choked—but took the hint. The men, who had wished themselves elsewhere, took steps to realise their wish. Colonel Yates hesitated, then followed them, muttering something about making himself scarce being the most acceptable thing he could do.

Then Winifred faced Peter and opened her arms. He put his hands on her shoulders but held her from him.

"Winnie!" he said hoarsely. "What does this mean?"

"It means 'where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge.'"

Still he held her from him and told her of the blow that had befallen him that day, of the determination he had come to, of the poverty, hardship and danger that it would involve. Winifred heard him to the end.

"The Wanazoa are your people," she said.
"Henceforth 'thy people shall be my people.'" She shook his hands from her shoulders and drew him towards her. "And naught but death shall part thee and me."



# A LEGEND OF GLASTONBURY

## By ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER

• ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON

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"And did those Feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?"
WILLIAM BLAKE.

T fell upon a day when spring was at its height and when the apple-trees in the west of Britain were bowed down under their weight of rosy blossom, that a small cavalcade of travellers was wending its way along the rough roads that lay beside the banks of the river Severn. At the head of the cavalcade rode a woman no longer young; yet whose bright blue eyes and haughty. mien showed that time and sorrow had failed to crush the indomitable spirit that animated her. This was the Lady Gwyneth, daughter of a British chieftain, and widow of one of the Roman colonists who were born in Britain after the first invasion of the conquering Empire. Her late husband's grandfather had come over with Julius Cæsar; and had been so charmed with the fields and forests of this pleasant island that he had settled in Britain and had never returned to Rome. His son had followed in his footsteps. But his grandson-who had married a British maiden—was not content to spend his life so far away from Roman civilisation and Roman culture; so he had carried away his youthful bride to a new life beyond the sea.

Thus it came to pass that the Lady Gwyneth had spent the whole of her married life under the shadow of imperial Rome; but when her husband was dead and her children were married, and she found herself old and alone in a strange land, her heart ached for her own country and her own people; so she turned her face westward and returned to the land where she was born; and she took up her abode in a villa which her husband's father had built and bequeathed to his son, not far from the stern

fortress where she had spent her childhood and where her brother still reigned in his father's stead.

It was not only homesickness that brought the Lady Gwyneth back to British shores. Whilst she was young and happy, and surrounded by the love of husband and children, the needs of her soul were completely satisfied by the feasts and ceremonies of the Roman gods; but when she became old and lonely, and realised that her life was approaching its end, her weary spirit shrank from the fighting and roystering rulers of Olympus, and craved for a purer and simpler Then she recalled the sterner and less sophisticated teaching of her early days, and yearned for the white-robed Druids and the woodland gods of her childhood. But alas!—when she returned to the sylvan rites and mysteries which had cast their magic over those early days, she found that the glamour had departed; and she realised that the magic had lain, not in the rites themselves, but in the youth which she brought to them; and that they offered no more comfort to her world-worn and weary spirit than did the gods of Rome. She was a wise woman and she could tear away the veil from her eyes; and she at last understood that it was the hope and glory of her own youth that had sanctified the sacred groves of Britain; and the peace and comfort of her married life that had lent such joy and comfort to the worship of the Roman gods. The Druids and the Olympians had done nothing for her; she had merely endowed them with her own joy and vitality; and now that the happiness of her life was over, she had nothing left wherewith to

glorify and vitalise the gods whom she worshipped. As she had nothing to give them, so they had nothing to give her; and life and death were alike empty.

Then, at the moment of her complete disillusionment, tidings reached her of a stranger who had come—with a handful of followers—to Glastonbury, preaching a new religion and teaching a fresh philosophy; and her restless and dissatisfied spirit—thirsting for anything that would comfort its loneliness and satisfy its longing—impelled her forthwith to visit this stranger, and to see if he could help her in her search for truth.

He was, she learned, a wealthy merchant who had visited these shores in days gone by. Ever since the days of the Phœnician traders who came to Cornwall from Tyre in search of tin, Eastern merchantmen had landed on these far-off islands from time to time on various trading expeditions; and among them had been one from Arimathæa, in Syria,-a rich man and one held in honour among his own people—Joseph by name. He had come once more, but no longer as a merchant prince; this time his object had been neither to buy tin nor to sell the rich materials and metals of his native land; he now came as an itinerant preacher, imbued with the message of strange happenings in the land beyond the coasts of Tyre. And no sooner did the Lady Gwyneth hear of him, than she made up her mind to learn all that he had to teach.

So she set out with her train of soldiers and waiting-women to travel to Glastonbury; and she sent messengers before her to Pendryn, a British chieftain in those parts, asking him to grant her and her cavalcade a night's lodging in his fortress on their way. And because, although she was old and wise she was still a woman, her eyes grew bright and blue as she dwelt in thought upon meeting Pendryn again after all these years; for they had loved each other in their youth, before the young Roman colonist had bewitched Gwyneth with his learning and culture, and with his stories of the glories that awaited her if she would marry him and go with him to the splendours of the Empire beyond the sea.

So the Lady Gwyneth and her train passed through the apple-orchards and mounted the hills till they came to the gate of the stern fortress in the mountains above the Severn; at the sound of her coming the old British chieftain came out to greet her and to bid her welcome to his grim mountain

He was a tall man with the remains of great beauty and strength; and with his aquiline nose and piercing dark eyes looked like an old eagle; but even on his great strength the years had left their mark, and his stern face was lined, and his curling hair and beard were grey. Just at first the two friends were astonished at the changes in each other that the years had wrought; and then, as they looked into one another's eyes, they were more astonished that the years had changed them so little; and that the brave young Pendryn and the brilliant young Gwyneth were really just the same as they used to be, only faintly and superficially disguised by a few grey hairs and a few faint wrinkles. And as they sat and feasted together in the great hall, the years rolled away, and they talked of the days when all the world was young. At least Gwyneth talked and Pendryn listened, as they had been wont to do in the years that were no more.

She told him how happy she had been in the early days of her marriage in her stately Roman home; and how kind her husband had been to her and how beautiful had been her children; and then, later, how her children had married and settled in distant parts of the far-flung Empire; and how her husband had become still kinder to her, for without him she would have been all alone. And she went on to tell how the day of life had waned and the shadows had lengthened; and how at last her wealthy Roman husband had been gathered to his fathers, and then she was desolate indeed. And Pendryn listened as he had always listened, and with an interest and sympathy that knew no bounds.

Then she told him how happily she had worshipped the gods of Rome in the zenith of her womanhood; and how they had failed her at last when she was old and alone.

"The gods are even as men," she added, "and have no use for us when we are old and grey-headed. It was no aged Daphne whom Apollo pursued among the laurels, and no time-worn Endymion that drew Diana down from the sky. Of a truth there is no room for the aged and the weary at the feasts of Olympus, any more than there is room for us at the dances of the Druids. It is no longer for us to crown ourselves with vine-leaves or to embrace under the mistletoe. These pleasures we have outgrown, and the gods have naught else to offer us in their stead."

"You speak truly," replied Pendryn;

"but all those things were good when we were young. And it seems to me, Lady, that it is not so much that we are too old for the gods to love us, as that we are too old to love the gods."

Gwyneth laughed, and her laugh was still the laughter of a girl. "How true, my Pendryn! And how like you! You always spoke little and to the point; whilst I spoke much and beside the mark."

Pendryn smiled; "Maybe; but it was good to hear you, however you spoke; and

it is good still."

"Then you shall hear more of it, my friend. As ever, I go further than you; and I

"Maybe, maybe; but it was very good while it lasted."

"And, again, when my heart was uplifted as I joined in the sacrifices to the gods of Rome, it was not the gods who filled me with contentment and encompassed my soul with peace; it was my husband and my children who satisfied the hunger of my heart and crowned my life with joy. I thought it was religion, but it was really wedded bliss."

The old soldier bowed his head. surely that also was good while it lasted, though I for my part never tasted it. Wars and tumults and struggles against wind and



"' My whole world fell in ruins about my ears."

maintain that we gave more to the gods than they ever gave to us. It was not they that we loved; but ourselves as seen in them."

The eyes of the old man twinkled: "May-

be, maybe," was all he said.

But the Lady Gwyneth said much more: "In the days of our youth, when our hearts glowed within us as we danced under the mistletoe at the feasts of Midwinter—and again when we danced on the greensward on Midsummer Eve, whilst the white-robed Druids chanted hymns of praise—it was not the glory of the gods that filled our hearts with joy and thanksgiving; it was because we loved each other, you and I, and thrilled with gladness at being together. We thought it was religion, but it was really love."

weather and invading foes have been the only wife and children that I have ever known."

Gwyneth's blue eyes grew tender: "Poor Pendryn, you have missed much in life!"

"And gained much, my Gwyneth. But

of that we will speak later."

"So I came back to the gods of my childhood," continued Gwyneth; "but they gave me no more comfort than did the gods of Rome."

"Poor Gwyneth: you also have missed much in life!"

"Yes, verily; but I do not yet despair. For tidings have come to me of a new teacher who has settled at Glastonbury with a small band of followers; and I am on

my way to see if he cannot give me rest for my soul."

Again Pendryn smiled: "The old Gwyneth—by which I mean the young Gwyneth; always in search of something new! The years have not changed you much, dear friend."

"It is my nature; I must always be seeking until I find the Truth. And I hear strange things of this Tyrian merchant, who has forsaken a life of ease and wealth and turned pilgrim in his old age. 'Tis said that he came to Glastonbury at the time of the Druids' Midwinter festival, that he planted his pilgrim's staff in the earth, and that it straightway was covered with May-blossoms. My life has come to its winter solstice, and of a truth I am too old for the British wreaths of mistletoe or the Roman garlands of vine-leaves; but a thorn-tree that blossoms at Midwinter is surely the flower for me!"

"Ah! Gwyneth, it makes one young again to listen to the cravings of your restless spirit—never at rest, but always stretching

out after something better!"

The woman tossed her head. "'Tis good for you thus to listen! You were always too slow to move, Pendryn—too contented with things as they were, and too sure that as they were so they would always be. It was that which came between us in the old days. Because we loved each other, you made sure that we always would love each other, and you went on your way contented; and while you were busy with your lands and your fighting and your duties as a chieftain, the wit and learning of my Roman lover stole my heart away."

The old Briton sighed as he stroked his beard. "You speak truly, Gwyneth; I made too sure of my happiness and so lost it. It has been a fault of mine to take life too easily; but I have had my punishment."

Being a woman, Gwyneth desired to talk about this punishment; being a man, Pendryn did not. "Methinks you bore your punishment fairly well," she said half scornfully; for her quick eyes had noted that though her former playmate's curly hair and beard had grown grey, and his aquiline face weather-beaten, there was still a look of peace and happiness about him which her own softer features lacked.

He shook his head: "Not at first, Gwyneth. When I learned that you had changed towards me and had given your hand in marriage to another, my whole world fell in ruins about my ears, and my life seemed

not worth living. Then something happened which changed everything."

The lady's eyes were alight with interest. "What was that? Tell me quickly, Pendryn; for whatsoever affects you will never lack interest for me. I have talked too much about myself. It is time now for you to take up your tale."

"You could never talk too much about yourself to me, Gwyneth," the old soldier answered simply; "there are only two in the whole world—you and one other—about

whom I wish to hear."

"Well, you have heard about me," replied the lady, settling herself more comfortably upon the fur-covered couch; "now let me hear about the one other."

So Pendryn began his tale. "It happened in this wise: after you had married and gone away, I thought that there was nothing left to live for; and my heart was full of bitterness towards you and the whole world."

"Towards me?" Old as she was, Gwyneth could not resist the personal touch.

"Yes; towards you in particular. I now see that my misery was chiefly my own fault; I was too easy and took too much for granted, as you have said. It has ever been my way not to know how much I value anything until I have lost it; and I have suffered much in consequence. But in those days I could only see that I had loved you truly all the time, and that you had failed me; and my heart was sore and angry."

"Then what befell to change your view and to soften your heart? Were the

Druids any help?"

"None whatever;" the old warrior's voice gave no uncertain sound. "Their gods are cruel gods in reality, and have no comfort for sorrowing souls. Like you, Gwyneth, I have learnt this; but I learnt it long ago."

"Then what did comfort you, and lead

you to love life again?"

The chieftain's brow was furrowed with thought. "I am a man of few words, and lack your gift of clothing my thoughts in living language, so you must be patient with me; as I have ever been too slow in action, so have I ever been too slow of speech. It was a late spring that year, and there were snowfalls after the lambs had come and the blossoms had opened; and there were fears among my people that the flocks and herds would perish from the cold, and that all the country-side would suffer loss. But the shepherds and herdsmen, who were seeking the flocks upon the snow-clad mountains, brought back strange tales of a youth who

walked alone upon the hills and called to the scattered and perishing sheep, and then led them down into the sheltered valleys where there were green pastures and still waters; so that none of the lambs were frozen nor any of the sheep lost."

"But how could this youth lead them if

he was a stranger in these parts?"

"I know not. All I know is that he called, and they heard his voice and followed whithersoever he led."

"And did you ever see this wandering

youth?"

"Once. I was walking one day through the woods that clothe the hills above Glastonbury, and I met a young man—little more than a boy—unlike any that I have ever seen before. I cannot describe him; but to me he seemed the embodiment of all the youth and joy and beauty and happiness that the world has ever known—nay, rather all that the world has ever dreamed of and longed for, yet has failed to find. And at the sight of him all my grief and bitterness vanished, and I knew then—as I have known ever since—that all was well with the world, simply because of him."

Gwyneth's face was alive with interest. "But how strange—how passing strange!"

"Strange enough, forsooth; yet when one saw him, the most natural thing in the world. Nature herself was aware of his presence and did him homage; the wild animals suddenly became tame and followed him; and the trees and flowers bowed their heads as he passed."

"And said he no word to you?"

"He merely called me by my name; and then I knew why the sheep had followed him when he called. From that moment I became his man, and shall so continue to my life's end. For when he spoke, I knew there was no reality in such things as sorrow and pain and death; but that the only real things were life and joy and bliss unspeakable, and that this boy held the key to them all. And in this belief I have never been shaken."

"And so you followed him and learned more about him?"

The old chief's face, which had glowed at the thought of the story he was telling, now clouded over and he sighed: "Alas! and alas! my slowness to seize happiness whilst it was within my grasp once again beset me; and I stood silent gazing after the youth as he passed on his way to Glastonbury, and let him go. It was only when I settled down at home and had time to think

over what had happened, that I knew that this passing encounter had changed my whole life; and then I started for Glastonbury in order to find him; but it was too late!"

"Perchance he was a vision, Pendryn,

and not a real boy at all."

"Nay, nay, Gwyneth; he was no vision, but flesh and blood as you and I are."

"Then why could you not find him?"

"Because by the time that I reached Glastonbury, he had left it. I learned that he had come to Britain with a rich young merchant who sailed from Tyre and dwelt in the far lands beyond that coast; and who now and again visited our shores, bringing a company of youths in his train. I followed this merchant and his company to the seashore, but was too late; before I reached the coast, they had taken ship for Tyre."

"And could no one in Glastonbury tell

you aught of the boy?"

"Yes; they told me much of the wonder and the grace and the goodness of him—and of how all who saw him loved him—and of how he brought joy and health and happiness wherever he went. They also told a strange tale they had heard from the sailors, of how their ship ran into a terrible storm on the way to Britain, and was like to perish; and at a word from this boy the winds and the waves hushed, and there was a great calm, so that they could continue their voyage in safety."

The Lady Gwyneth groaned: "Oh, Pendryn! How could you let him go?"

"The old story: I was too slow to see and seize my chance of happiness until it had passed me by."

"And so you lost him for ever. Alas!

Alas!"

Pendryn shook his head: "Nay; not for ever, Gwyneth. I am sure—surer than of aught else in the world—that some day I shall see that boy again. He called me by name and so made me his faithful servitor; and nothing can break that bond. It is the certainty that I am his and that one day he will claim me, that has filled my heart with peace and happiness all these years; and has robbed old age—yea, and even death itself—of all their terrors. Because he was the embodiment of life and youth, I know that life and youth are the only realities, and that old age and death are but passing dreams."

"But, Pendryn, how can you know all

"I know not how I know it; all I know is that I do."

"And did you learn the name of this wonderful stranger?"

"Nay; the folks in Glastonbury did not

Syrian town called Nazareth; and that he had come to Britain in the company of the young Tyrian merchant."



know his name. All they could tell me was that he was the son of a carpenter in a

"But could they not even tell you the name of the merchant?"

"Yea; they told me that; it was Joseph, and he came from Arimathæa, beyond the coasts of Tyre."

with a great cry: "By my faith, this is the best news that I have heard for many a long day! Of a truth I will go with you,



"'1 met a young man—little more than a boy—unlike any that I have ever seen before. . . . He seemed the embodiment of all the youth and joy and beauty and happiness that the world has ever known."

The Lady Gwyneth started: "But, Pendryn, how passing strange! That is the name of the teacher who has brought a new religion and a fresh philosophy to Britain, and whom I am now seeking in Glastonbury."

Then the old chieftain sprang to his feet

Gwyneth; and will question this merchant as to the Boy Who came with him to Glastonbury long ago; and he will doubtless be able to give me news of One Whom I have loved and served in secret and in silence all these years!"

The lady rose from her couch and stretched out her hand to her host: "Prythee call my waiting women, Pendryn, and I will bid you goodnight and repair to my chamber; for we must start early in the morning on our joint quest. It has never been my way to go slowly when I know my way; and something tells me that we shall both find all that we desire at Glastonbury. Of a truth it is a good omen that the merchant whom you seek and the pilgrim whom I seek are one and the same; and I augur from it that the new religion that he has come here to teach, will prove to be what

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I have been in search of all my days."

As they bade each other goodnight the old warrior stooped and kissed the Lady Gwyneth on the forehead in token of the love that had once been between them and of the friendship that was still theirs: "Methinks," he said, and his voice was very gentle, "that I am too old for new religions and strange philosophies; I will leave those to your more active and subtle mind: all that I want of this travelling teacher is that he will give me news of the Boy Who met me in the woods and called me by my name. That is all I ask and all I need."

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Note.—There is an ancient legend to the effect that S. Joseph of Arimathæa was, in his earlier days, one of the Phœnician merchants who used to come to Britain from Tyre, bringing Oriental merchandise in exchange for British tin. Tradition goes on to tell that he always brought with him on these expeditions a small company of youthful friends; and that on one occasion the young Jesus of Nazareth was of this number, long before the three years of Our Lord's Ministry had begun. Another and a better-known tradition says that Joseph in his old age was sent by S. Philip to preach the Gospel in Britain; and that he settled with his companions at Glastonbury, and founded the Church there.—E.T.F.

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## MY GREYHOUND.

◉

HERE'S Beau Brindle.
Whisper him "Go!"
But never whisper him
"Brindle, slow!"
For that's a word he will never know.

Lean as a serpent,
Smooth as a swan,
Whisper him "Go!" and
Brindle's gone,
A self-drawn arrow swept on and on.

Bawl "Ho! back to me,
Brindle lad!"

And see him swallow
The space like mad,
As swift to home as he was to gad.

Velvet-padded,
With limbs steel-sprung,
He'll romp around you
With lolling tongue
That says "Laugh, Master, the world is young!"

Beautiful Brindle,
Fleet and fine!
Some love women
And some love wine,
But my heart's lost to this hound of mine.

WILFRID THORLEY.



"'It's not the sixpence. It's the principle. Do you know what principle is, Emily?'"

# MOTHER-IN-LAW

## By OWEN OLIVER

## ■ ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL ■

was a little man, but he didn't know it. His wife was a big woman, but she didn't know it either. So he not only ruled his grocer's shop, and the two assistants, but also the house attached to it. He even made Mrs. Judd keep household accounts and audited them weekly. He had a particular snort for the occasion. When the children heard it, they whispered, "Pa's doing Ma's books," and stayed out of the room.

The audit went on something like this:
"Balance one eighteen four. Carried forward one eighteen two. Which is it?
... Here, give me the money to count. ... It's neither. It's one seventeen ten. Where's the sixpence gone?"

"You can't expect me to be right to sixpence, dear,"

"It's not the sixpence. It's the principle. Do you know what principle is, Emily?"

"Something to do with interest, isn't it, dear? You multiply by five, and strike two

figures off."

"No, no, no! That's principal. I meant principull; p-l-e. What is the first principle of account-keeping?"

"There's no interest in it."

At this point Mr. Judd would snort violently.

"Emily, you drive me to desperation."

At this point Mrs. Judd would weep and say, "You do me!" And Mr. Judd, who wasn't really a bad husband, would enter up "Petty expenditure: —. - 6." to make the book balance, and suggest going to the Pictures.

As a matter of fact it wasn't the accounts

which drove Mrs. Judd to the one desperate deed of her placid life. It was a hat. Alexander went to the milliner's with her and selected it; and it was last year's. By the next half-day excursion she went to ask her Aunt Jane what was to be done, as Aunt Jane was always ready to tell anyone

Aunt Jane was the exception to prove the mildness of big women. She was not in the least like her niece, who was a smiling, stoutish, well-favoured blonde; stern, bony, dark, unlovely person. She stood five feet eleven, and yet she governed a husband of five feet four. Her face grew red with wrath while her niece told her the tale of the hat.

"Take it back and change it," she advised.

"You don't know Alec," Mrs. Judd whim-

pered.

"Your fault for going away and marrying a stranger. Some day I'll come over and make his acquaintance, and give him a piece of my mind."

"He'd only be angry with me when you

were gone."

"Angry! Two can play at that game, my girl."
"But I can't, Aunt," Mrs. Judd declared

plaintively.

"Bah! You're like your mother; can't say 'bo' to a goose; or even a man. If she did her duty, she'd come and stay with you, and put him in his place."

"He won't have her come to stay," Mrs. Judd stated. "He doesn't hold with

mothers-in-law; not for men."

"I'd like to hear your uncle say that my mother wasn't coming to my house," Aunt Jane said, thumping the table. "I'd fetch her the very next day! If she were still alive, that is."

"Uncle isn't like Alec," Mrs. Judd pro-

"His wife isn't like Alec's!" her Aunt snapped. "Husbands are what you make 'em! There's no man can turn his motherin-law into the street if she comes with her boxes and says she's going to stop. Not that your ma would be much use if she came; never managed her own husband even. 'I must see what Tom says about it.' That was her parrot-cry."

"But Dad always said what she wanted him to! Somehow people never like to go against her. I expect it's because she's so tiny. She might have an influence over even Alec. The bravest and most determined men, like he is, seem to be a little afraid of their mothers-in-law. I expect that's why he doesn't want her to come. He doesn't realise that Ma's nothing to be afraid of. You see, he's never met her."

"Ah!" Aunt Jane snorted. "Neither has he. . . . So, if I came, and we said Iwas your Ma, he couldn't contradict us. . . . Emily, that's the way out. I'll come and stay with you; and be his ma-in-law. Ha,

"Aunt Jane!" Mrs. Judd protested. "Wouldn't it be rather deceitful? wicked?"

"You can't have a conscience over a man who makes his wife keep accounts and chooses her hats."

"No-o. I wasn't thinking so much of conscience, as of being found out. . . . You don't really mean it, do you?"

"I'm in the habit of saying what I mean, Emily; as he'd soon find out. Put down that handkerchief and pick up your courage. You've got to set him in his place once and for all, or wear that hat."

"I will not. It's last year's."

"Then, unless you're prepared to tell him so yourself, and that you'll have no interference with your dress or housekeeping in future—

"Me tell Alec that!" Mrs. Judd screamed. "Aunt Jane! I couldn't!... I'd rather -rather deceive him a little. It would be for his good, wouldn't it?"

"Then I'll come Wednesday afternoon," her aunt said; "unexpected, mind. I shall put Atkins on the labels, and you'll call me mother.' We will go and change the hat on Thursday morning."

Wednesday was early closing day. Mr. Judd was supervising the shop-boy putting up the shutters, when a cab driven by Surly Sanders drew up at the side door. A large, fearsome lady alighted.

"I'll find out where you're to carry the

boxes to," she said briskly.

"I ain't a porter," Surly growled. "I'm a cabman."

"Man!" cried the lady. "You!... Put 'em on the pavement. That's part of your duty, anyhow. You'll get your fare when you've carried them inside, and not before. And you handle 'em gentle, or I'll have you in Court for damages.'

"You're a nice party, you are!" Surly grumbled; but he began to unship the luggage. Then Mr. Judd intervened hastily.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said, "but you've come to the wrong house. It's mine; name of Judd; Alexander Fitzgerald Judd."

The large lady eyed him critically.

"All that name and only you! I'm Emily's mother; less name and more in it! . . . Here she is! . . . Well, Emmy, I thought it was time I saw how you were getting on, and what sort of a husband you'd got. Not much of him, and doesn't seem very sociable! . . . You settle with the cabman, Alexander Whatshisname. What do you call him for short, Emmy? . . . 'Alley,' did you say? Looks it." She stepped inside, and her strident voice resounded in the passage. "No use coming all this distance, unless I make a long stay, so . . ."

"Where do they go?" the cabman asked. He jerked his thumb at the boxes.

"The spare room, Alec dear," Mrs. Judd

"Lend him a hand," the large lady further called, "and show me that my girl has married a man."

Mr. Judd muttered something; but he took hold of a handle. "Room opposite the landing," he muttered.

He was so dazed that he paid what the cabman asked without objecting—which there was good cause for doing.

"Mother-in-law come to stay, eh?" the

cabman suggested, shaking his head.
"Not for long," Mr. Judd said resolutely.

"I don't hold with 'em in the house."

"Neither do I," said the cabman; "dead against it; but mine's there!"

He got up on the box, still shaking his head. Mr. Judd set his lips firmly and walked into the parlour determined to assert himself. He stood back to the fireplace, with his thumbs in the arms of his waist-coat, which his wife knew to be equivalent

"You might have given us notice of your visit, Mrs. Atkins," he said with dignity.

to a declaration of war.

Aunt Jane folded her arms, which her niece recognised as the declaration of war on her part.

"What?" she snapped. "Notice to my own family? If I'm to treat you as a son——"

"Don't, Ma," Mrs. Judd begged. "Begin as friends anyhow. Kiss Mother, Alec, and tell her she's welcome."

"Or that I'm not," said the visitor.
"I'm always glad when people speak their minds. It frees me to speak mine....
You was saying that I ought to have behaved different. You being a better judge

of manners than me, I suppose?... Do you let him keep on his cap indoors, Emily? If my husband had dared, I'd have knocked it off his head!"

Mr. Judd removed his cap hastily. He prided himself that he was quite the gentleman, and was wearing it inadvertently.

"Forgot," he muttered. "Emily doesn't

mind, do you?"

He turned to his wife. She was about to say that of course she didn't mind; but her Aunt poked her; and then she remembered her own hat!

"Of course," she said loftily, "I prefer to see you behave like a gentleman."

Mr. Judd felt that the foundations of the world were shaking under him. That *Emily* should speak so to *him*!

"I'll be off to the football match," he said desperately. "I don't want any dinner."
"Oh, Alec—" Mrs. Judd wailed. She

"Oh, Alec—" Mrs. Judd wailed. She was going to beg him to partake of the nice hot joint; but she stopped at a look from her Aunt. "How can you be so rude to Mother?" she substituted.

"Temper!" her Aunt snapped. "Like a child. He ain't much bigger. He only says it to be pressed to stop."

"The head of a household," he protested,

" expects—er—"

"To be treated as a lady," Aunt Jane supplied, "and to have her husband behave as a gentleman. Wearing your cap indoors, indeed! And sulking like a great baby! Alexander the Great, I suppose you think yourself?"

If Mr. Judd had any such impression it disappeared during the large lady's visit. He made a gallant fight at the start, but three defeats upon the first day disheartened him

He asserted his dignity by coming in late to tea; but he found that all the crumpets had been eaten. His "mother-in-law" said that, if *she* were his wife, he'd have had no tea at all; and she added that even a worm would turn—with her mother behind her.

He asked his wife for the accounts, but she whispered, "Ssh! Mother doesn't hold with a husband looking into the housekeeping. Don't mention them, if you don't want another quarrel with her!"

He didn't, so he accepted the second defeat.

He started complaining to his wife when they were going to bed; but Mrs. Judd wept loudly, in accordance with instructions, and "mother" appeared in her night attire, at the door. She took Mrs. Judd away to her room, after calling Mr. Judd a miserable little bully.

"The next time I have to protect my girl from you," she threatened, "you'll bear the marks of it."

"You're too hard on him," Mrs. Judd whimpered in the spare room; "talking of protecting,' as if he'd hurt me. Why, he wouldn't lay his little finger on me to save his life!"

"Do him good!" her Aunt grunted. "He's much too stout for his age; wants exercise. We'll go and change that hat first thing to-morrow. You get into bed and go to sleep."

They changed the hat accordingly. Mr. Judd ventured a remonstrance, but Aunt Jane drove him from the room with a counter-attack. "You to think that you can choose a woman's clothes, and can't



"'You might have given us notice of your visit, Mrs. Atkins,' he said with dignity."

(In justice to Mr. Judd, let it also be said that he certainly wouldn't have done it for any other reason.)

"Do you mean to put up with that hat, and be a laughing-stock, or don't you?" her Aunt demanded. "You don't, eh? Then he's got to be put in his place once and

" I can hear him walking up and down our room, he's that upset," Mrs. Judd further whimpered.

even choose a necktie for yourself! Yellow with your complexion! You get them, in future, for him, Emily. As for the cut of that coat! Here, turn round and look at your back in the glass. It's got a tail like a bantam. We'll come to the tailor's and see you fitted next time."

He inferred from the "we" that his mother-in-law was contemplating a long visit. He became so depressed that his wife felt sorry for him-even tender toward

him. She was an affectionate creature and missed making a fuss over her man. She hinted several times to Aunt Jane that she thought that Alec was sufficiently subdued, and she might go.

"I could always say I was going to send for you again," she explained. (She didn't

mean to.)

"I'm not going to spend my time and money running backward and forward." her

Mrs. Judd felt helpless before the terrible

"I don't see how to get rid of her, Alec," she told her husband. "I wish I did." She spoke the truth.

"Have you asked her when she means

to go?" he inquired.

"Yes, dear. She says not till—not till You see, she thinks that a wife ought to settle things like housekeeping; and her



Aunt stated. "I'll do the job proper, while I'm here."

In the second week she did her job so thoroughly that Mrs. Judd began to side openly with her oppressed husband.

"Domineering him like you do!" she protested privately; "and you not even

his mother-in-law.

"Would you like me to tell him that?" said Aunt Jane. "Eh?... No?... Then don't you sauce me, miss, or I will, as sure as my name's Jane Tompkins."

own dress, of course; particularly hats. I don't think men really understand them."

"Look here, Emily," Mr. Judd offered. "I'll never interfere in them again, if only

you'll get her to go."

Mrs. Judd suggested this to Aunt Jane, as a satisfactory settlement; but her Aunt merely sniffed and said: "Promises! Piecrust! I don't leave this house until he's fixed in good habits. . . . You've burnt the account book, haven't you? And he sends in just what you tell him to from the shop, doesn't he? And you stuck to it about having that new skirt a foot shorter, didn't

you ? '

"I told Miss Miller to make it six inches shorter," Mrs. Judd said. "I do think, Aunt, a man should have some say in how much leg his wife shows. He's quite altered; and, all the time you're here, I'm trembling for fear he should find out. If that should happen, I'd never dare face Alec again."

"You mustn't let it happen," Aunt Jane said. "It would undo all the good I've done; and I don't say I'd feel in a com-

fortable position myself."

On the Monday of the third week Surly Sanders's cab drew up at the door again. A little old lady with a deprecating smile alighted.

"I wonder," she asked the truculent driver, "if you'd be so very kind as to carry the boxes in for me? I'm somebody else's mother, you know!"

She beamed up at him.

"Then I bet he's got a good one," the driver said. "You knock at the door, Ma. I'll fetch your luggage in all right."

She knocked at the door. Mrs. Judd came to it; and Aunt Jane had a look from the passage. Mrs. Judd screamed; and Aunt Jane held to the door-post, feeling faint. For the old lady was Mrs. Judd's mother!

"Funny your Aunt being here!" she said, when the cabman had gone. "What will your good husband say to my coming like this? But I was half-way toward you at Cousin Polly's, and I was so anxious to see my dear girl, and her dear children, and her dear husband. I shan't intrude for long, or put you out in any way, you tell him. I shall look upon him as my own son. Do make him understand that."

"You'd better tell her, Emily," Aunt Jane

said gloomily.

"You tell her," Mrs. Judd begged tearfully. "I always said it would be wrong, especially if it was found out. This shows I was right."

"The fact is, Grace," Aunt Jane said, "he wasn't treating her proper; bullying

her------'

"He was not," Mrs. Judd cried. "He only settled things rather too much; house-keeping and all that. He's cleverer than I, and—and sometimes I wish I'd put up with it."

She applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Look at the state he's brought her to," said Aunt Jane; "a bundle of nerves. He made her keep accounts to the last penny, the stingy—"

"I won't have you call him stingy," Mrs. Judd protested. "He gave me quite a lot of housekeeping money; and he didn't say much if I wanted more. He only thought that keeping accounts was the proper thing. Principle, he called it."

"Yes, yes," her mother said. "Men are like that. They don't know any better, and

we must humour them."

"He even chose her clothes," Aunt Jane

cried.

"Not all of them," Mrs. Judd explained; but he did choose a hat. Mother, it was the last straw!"

"If you'd told him that straws were out——"

"I don't mean the material. It was a velour; last year's shape. I mean it was more than I could stand."

"To make a long story short," Aunt Jane said, "Emily was that trodden-under, and couldn't call her soul her own, that something had to be done to put him in his place; and who was the one to do it?

His mother-in-law, of course."

"I'm not one for setting people down," the old lady said. "It ain't the way to raise 'em up; and who am I to talk? Just a silly woman who thought the world of her husband; and he was no worse for it; and neither will Alexander—but I do hope he'll let me call him Alec—neither will he be any worse for me thinking more of the good in him than of any little weaknesses I might notice. We've all got them. I'm going to ask him at the start to look upon me as a mother, not a mother-in-law."

"Mother!" Mrs. Judd wailed. "He thinks Aunt Jane is you. We've told him so."

"Emily!" her mother cried. "That you should do such a terrible thing!... In six-and-twenty years of married life I never told a lie to my husband; or spoke a harsh word to him; not even on pension days. If he'd fallen in with his friends, and had a drop too much, I just put him to bed; with the hot-water bottle if he had pains.... "As for you, Jane..." The old lady got her handkerchief out. "You—you've supplanted me in my son's affections!"

"Whatever I've done," Aunt Jane declared, "I haven't done that! He told me yesterday that he'd bury me cheerful!

If you give us away, he'll be able to trample on Emily for the rest of her days. The only sensible thing you can do is to be her Aunt Jane!"

The old lady rocked herself to and fro,

and dabbed her eyes.

"I didn't want a nephew," she wailed.
"I wanted a son. I never had one; and I thought, if I was very nice to him, perhaps he'd look upon me as a mother."

The door opened then; and Alexander Fitzgerald Judd came in; and for once in his life he didn't feel big; and was.

"Very pleased to see you, mother," he said. "Hope you're making a nice long stay? I heard enough from outside to listen till I'd heard a bit more. Emily——!" He shook his head at his wife.

"Alec!" cried Mrs. Judd. "I didn't mean—" She got hold of his coat sleeve.

"Least said soonest mended," he remarked, "though I will say you're a . . . Well, I won't say it. Saw Ma shake her head."

"I'll never do it again," Mrs. Judd pleaded.

"Neither will I then," he said. "Emmy and I don't get on so bad, Ma!"

He kissed his wife; and he kissed his mother-in-law; but he couldn't help snapping his fingers at Aunt Jane.

"You little—" she began; but his mother-in-law sprang in front of him, like

a ruffled hen protecting her offspring.
"Little indeed!" she cried. "He's a
full inch more'n yours! And big for his
size!"

"Well," said Aunt Jane, "if he is, he'll give out that you're his ma—married again and changed your name—and save Emily's face, over explaining to the neighbours about his mother-in-law."

"Here!" said Mr. Judd gallantly.

"Shake hands, Aunt Jane! We'll get on all right when you aren't my ma-in-law. It put us both in a difficult position."

Mrs. Atkins has been with the Judds for two months now, and Mr. Judd won't hear of her leaving yet. He is quite under her thumb, but he doesn't know it; and, curiously enough, neither does she!

## THE GENTLE ROVER.

FAR has she wandered, still would she wander again; Into the green and the gold, into the blue. Thundering seas, murmuring woods, cities of men, These has she known, These were her own, These would she savour anew.

Good be her faring—Springtime renewing its spells—Over the sea and the earth, eager to hoard Magical scent, alien speech, clamour of bells. These shall she hold, These be the gold, These be her venture's reward.

May she, returning—bearing the spoil she has won—Bring in her voice and her eyes, bring in her hair, Whisper of woods, blue of the sea, gleam of the sun. These—her amends, These, to her friends,

These will be recompense fair.

LEONARD DENZELL.

## THE STRANGER

## By E. TEMPLE THURSTON

HE Momedan's Head Inn is situated in a hollow of the South Downs. Undoubtedly it was originally called the Mahommedan's Head. There is a sign-board hanging over the porch on which, with the aid of a little imagination, can be traced the all-but-obliterated features of a black man's face. It must have been painted for more than a hundred years, and for so long has not only the inn, but the hamlet also, been called Momedan's Head, it would be useless to persuade anyone in the neighbourhood that there was the vestige of an H in the spelling of it.

It lies off the road that runs through Mavant from Melchester to Marling and all those villages that shelter under the north line of the hills to Godhurst. From Mavant it is a quiet road. If you want to know how quiet it is, let me tell you they have been five years mending it since the War. It is as quiet as that. Yet if you walked along it, looking to right and left, you would never see so much as a chimney or a tail of smoke from the Momedan's Head.

Three miles from Mavant the road begins its climb over the Downs and falls down at last into the pool of Marling village like a cascade tumbling in spirals over the rocks. It is up there in the heart of the Downs that the Momedan's Head crouches down in its hollow, hidden by the beech trees, and scarcely a traveller or a tramp or a stranger of any sort calls there for a drink from one year's end to the other.

It is surrounded by a few cottages and a forge. That is the community of the hamlet of Momedan's Head. There is no shop. No post-office. If you need such conveniences of civilisation as these, you must walk for them. There is good beer. That is enough for the farm labourers who occupy the cottages. But the forge is inevitable. Without the forge the neighbouring farms would be at a standstill. For this is the life of Momedan's Head, a succession of seasons, a succession of crops, like a team of horses coming and going, appearing and

disappearing over a hilly field between the headlands.

There is no point in romancing about this because this is not a romantic story, yet it has the eerie atmosphere that falls about lonely places at evening time when the rooks have come home and a humid silence steals out of the trees before nightfall.

It was midwinter. The Mavant constable had not been along that way for three weeks. He was a new man. Always careful of her closing hours, Mrs. Corder was particularly careful with the new constable. It could not be said as yet whether he was of a friendly nature. She never knew when he might turn up. Sharp at ten o'clock she went into that other room off the bar where they played Ring'em and Shove-halfpenny and in all the dignity of her best black dress she said:

"Time, please-"

And there was not one man when she said it that way who wasted any more time over his glass of beer. In three minutes they were all gone, and the windows that had burnt so brightly were swallowed up in darkness.

There is a whole volume to be written about Mrs. Corder, with her white hair, her rosy face, the handsome figure of a stout but comely matron she carried with a pride of command you seldom see these days. But it cannot be written here. She stands out in this story. But then in any community of people she would do that. Even in the days before she married Corder, when she was in service in a titled family, the picture of that household is incomplete to me without her. So as now, in the Momedan's Head, she ruled them all. Within the walls of the inn her word was law.

It was half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, two hours before opening time. The folly of that! And the men coming out of the fields by five! The front door was shut and locked. Mr. and Mrs. Corder and the two girls, Molly and Jenny, were having their tea in the kitchen.

"Soon as Christmas is over," Mrs. Corder was saying with the clear vision of a month's work spread like a map in front of her— "Soon as Christmas is over—" A knock on the front door brought all their eyes together. The vibrations of that knock travelled like fading footsteps through the As they died away, they all looked at Mrs. Corder. Involuntarily she accepted the responsibility of command.

"You go see who it is, Molly," she said. Molly rose at once and went out. They all sat listening. In the distance of the passage they heard the bolts drawn and the door opened. A faint murmur of voices reached the kitchen. Mr. Corder kept his head perched on one side like a startled bird. Mrs. Corder's lips were pursed, as though she were saying "Ssh!" to a lot of children. Jenny's eyes were staring and wide.

After a few moments, Molly appeared at the kitchen door with sternly suppressed emotion and said:

"The Mavant constable wants to see you." "Who?" said Mr. Corder. "Me?"

"No-me," said Mrs. Corder with reasonable assumption. "What about?"

"Wouldn't say," replied Molly.

There were a few moments of speculation when everyone, even Mr. Corder, offered his opinion. But as Mr. Corder was speaking while Mrs. Corder was speaking, the sound common sense of his suggestions was not heard. Mrs. Corder's remarks were even sounder than common sense.

"Ask him to come in here," she said-"and, Jenny, you get out another cup. It's freezin' outside. He might like a cup of tea."

Mr. Corder had thought of many reasonable things, but he had not thought of anything as sound as that. A few moments later the new constable from Mayant was standing with his peaked hat in his hand at the kitchen door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Corder. "Get the constable a chair, Jenny. Molly, pour out another cup of tea. Haven't you finished

yet, Corder?"

Corder had not finished. Nothing would induce him to finish. But he made way for the constable at the table and stood in a dark corner of the room listening, where everyone forgot his existence.

The constable poured his hot cup of tea into the saucer and said it was going to be

a cold night.

"Freezin'," said Mrs. Corder. "Water's ice what I gives my chickens to drink."

"Snow before long," said the constable.
"When the wind drops," said Corder out of the dark corner; but no one heard

It was ten minutes before the constable said anything to justify his office. Even then, looking no more than out of the corner of his eye and speaking with a voice that reduced significance to the smallest minimum of suspicion, he only said:

"Anybody been about here to-day?"

"What sort of body?" asked Mrs. Corder. By the mutual consent of her two daughters and the complete elimination of Corder in the darkness, she conducted the entire conversation with the constable as though they had been sitting alone in that kitchen over a quiet cup of tea.

"A stranger," said the constable, by no means prepared to give away all his informa-

tion at once.

"You seen any stranger, Molly?"

"No-I haven't."

"Not a dark man, medium height, grey eyes, wearin' a cloth cap, and a brown suit with a darker patch in the seat of the trousers? Answers to the name of William Hall—alias Smith—alias Dickens?"

"If she'd seen one," said Mrs. Corder, "she'd never have known all that about

"Why-what's the matter?" asked Cor-

The constable peered into the dark corner. "He says what's the matter," said Mrs. Corder, interpreting the sound out of the darkness.

The constable rose to his feet.

"If yer haven't seen anybody, doesn't make any odds," he said.

He went to the door and then turned round as though it had just occurred to him

as he was leaving.

"If you see anyone answerin' to that description," he said—" the best you can do is to detain him. Lock him up, and if you take my advice, you'll lock him up safe. As soon as you've got him safe, send someone along on a bicycle to us at Mavant. We'll come along sharp and fetch him."

"Who is he?

They all asked it simultaneously.

"Criminal lunatic," said the constable-"escaped out of the asylum by Melchester there. Shot his wife and his sister-in-law, then tied a boot-lace round his father's neck and strangled him. 'Course he may have gone Selsey way and down to the coast. Some think he may have got up into the Downs. Anyway, I'm lookin' round. Good

night."

In the short while he had been there, the darkness seemed to have fallen. In a sharp voice, that would not admit of fear, Mrs. Corder demanded that one of the lamps should be lit. While Molly was finding the matches and striking a damp one without

was happy until the lamp was lit. There was an uncomfortable noise in their ears, the retreating sound of the constable's footsteps as he mounted the hills to the Mavant road and left the Momedan's Head in the hollow behind him.

As Mr. Corder left the room to fetch the pony, he was heard to say:



effect on the box, they heard the outer door slam. The constable had gone. The house was silent.

"Light that lamp!" exclaimed Mrs. Corder, "and don't stand there struck of a heap, Corder. You haven't brought that pony in and it's after five. Clear the table, Jenny."

Her voice brought back a sense of life again into the room. But none of them

"All very well telling us to detain him, a lunatic that has killed three people. But who's going to do the detaining?"

Joliff at the forge, Jim Manning the rabbitcatcher, Tom Shire, who was a woodsman and a poacher, and two or three others, all came in that night. They sat round the oak trestle table in the room off the bar and ordered their pints and looked at the three rings Tom Shire had put on number thirteen the night before in his game of Ring'em with the carter over at Squire Woods'.

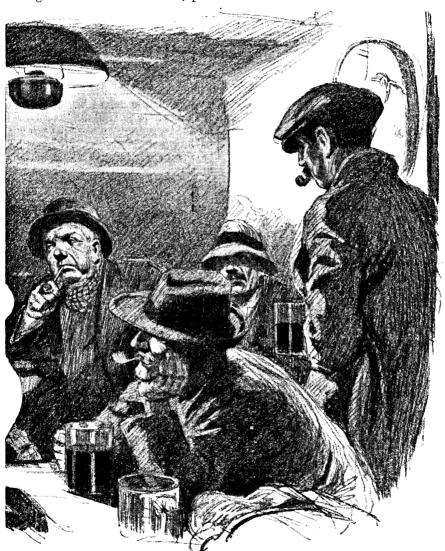
Tom had wanted thirty-nine to get out.

"Hang it if he didn't put they three thirteens up," said Joliff, "one on top of t'other and takin' no notice of it, 'sif that was what he'd got to do and he done it; puts

performing it, as though it were an epic of one of the old ballad-makers, a tale of legend that had been told through the ages.

"Oo-ay," he laughed—" and was a sharp frost, too!"

Jim Manning rang the wire bell with its curtain-ring handle for another pint. Two others swallowed the remainder of their



"They saw the game which will be remembered at the Momedan's Head for all time."

t'other three rings down on table and sits here side of me and says—'Sharp frost to-night,' he says."

The room rumbled with laughter at the memory of it. Tom's voice rose with them to a high guffaw. He listened to the account of his own feat of skill, and his manner in

beer. It was Mrs. Corder who appeared at the door from the bar.

She hung their glasses on her fingers and turned as she reached the door.

"Any of you boys seen a stranger about in the woods, or on the road, or maybe up on the hills?"

Sam Joliff was forty-eight if he was a day and Tom Shire was nearer sixty than fifty, but they were all "the boys" to Mrs. Corder.

They looked at each other in silence. It was not the sort of question they might have expected. It took them unawares. They were beginning to search their memories through the length of the day's work when Jim Manning answered for the lot of them.

"What sort of a stranger?"

"A dark man, medium-sized"—the constable had not written out the description—"with a dark patch on the seat of his trousers." She remembered that.

"Dark patch," said Joliff—" on the seat

of his trousies."

The minds of one and all of them were recalling the trousers on the men they had seen that day, and not one could remember a stranger answering to that description.

"What about him?" asked Jim.

"Criminal lunatic," said Mrs. Corder, who had recovered all the spirit of command, with the lighted bar and the sounds of voices, the rattle of glasses and the laughter in the room beyond. "Killed his wife and his sister-in-law and strangled his father with a boot-lace." These were the details that remained vividly in her memory. "Escaped out of that asylum they've got, other side of Melchester. Constable from Mavant came this evening. They're hunting for him."

There was no information to be got from them. She had gone with the glasses on her fingers. The room was silent. They were all looking at each other, their eyes centred like the inner point of a compass. Joliff was the first to speak.

"If I'd seen 'um," he said, "I shouldn't have thought of lookin' at the seat of his

trousies."

"They police be sharp 'uns," said Tom.

A young stockman from a farm near by said:

"Once you gone and got yerself in the hands of the likes of them, you'd never know what sort of little thin' 'ud give yer away."

"You're right there, boy," said Joliff.

"I know I'm right," he said.

Tom Shire stood up and hitched round the loose seat of his trousers, exposing a patch of material so foreign to the rest of the garment that it could have been seen at any distance.

"If he'd a patch like that," said Tom, "you'd know him."

He meant it for a laugh. But none of

them did laugh. It had had quite a different effect from what he had intended. They were all of them seeing the criminal lunatic there in their midst and wondering whose job it would be to tackle him. In the middle of a weighty silence, Joliff said:

"What would you do, Jim Manning, if a stranger came in now with a patch in the

seat of his trousies?"

It was that patch. No other description of the constable's, so far as it had been retailed to them by Mrs. Corder, had touched their sense of vision. Jim Manning, the rabbit-catcher, stood up and told them what he would do. He was a boastful man. They nudged each other as he told them for the hundredth time the story of how he had stopped a runaway horse in the South Street of Melchester. And when Tom Shire said, "What sort of a patch had 'un got in his seat, Jim?" the whole room was a rouse of laughter and the young men slamming their pint glasses down on the oak trestle table to give a full sound to it.

"Lot they care," said Mrs. Corder from her chair in the bar—"if there be a man about would cut all their throats so long as

they were wet."

The whole house was reverberating with their laughter. And then the whole house was still. There was not a voice laughing anywhere.

"What's that now?" said Mrs. Corder.
"There's a silence for you." Such a silence it was, so penetrating, that without the tinkle of the bell from the other room she went to the door and looked in.

The men were still seated round the trestle table. Their hands were gripping the handles of their glass pints, their eyes were set like a lot of rabbits to where, standing in the other doorway from the lane outside, was a dark man of medium height and his eyes were wandering round the room.

At the sight of Mrs. Corder appearing in the other doorway he asked in a slow voice if he could get a pint in that place.

It was a full moment before she answered and then, with considerable presence of mind, she said with a steady voice:

"You wait there and I'll get you one."

Directly she had gone out she called Sam Joliff. He would not have come so quickly at any other time. His name was scarcely out of her mouth when he was there in the bar beside him.

"That's the man, Sam," she said. "It's up to you in there. Detain him. That's what the constable said. And I'll send

Jack Honey over on his bicycle to Mayant."

"You can't detain a man as don't want to be detained," said Sam. "Not unless you take the risk of his objectin' to it."

"Get Tom Shire to take him on at a game of Ring'em," she suggested, "that'll help out time while Jack's gone to Mavant. Tell Tom I said so."

"But we don't know it is the man," persisted Sam. "There's dark men and medium men through all Sussex, but none can't see has he got a patch in his trousers, 'cos he's got a long coat on."

"Never mind, you get him to play a game of Ring'em. Tom knows how to win and he knows how to last it out if he wants to.

Finally, with much manœuvring, he tipped a wink to Tom and proposed that the stranger should play a game with their crack man.

should play a game with their crack man. "I don't mind," said the man. "It's a

long time since I threw a ring."

They looked at each other wisely. A long time no doubt—if he had a patch in the seat of his trousers.

Jim Manning took the slate to mark the score. He wasn't going to show he was afraid.

"Two hundred and one," said Tom, "and play out to the number."

"Two hundred and one," said the stranger.

There had never been a game seen like it in the Momedan's Head. Tom Shire was reckoned the best hand at Ring'em in that



"He was still laughing, laughing aloud, laughing alone, as he ran like a bounding hare-up into the hills."

Then while he's throwing, p'r'aps one of you can lift up the tail of his coat and see."

It was all very well a woman talking about one man lifting the tail of another's coat and that other a perfect stranger. Sam had his own ideas of the way a man might resent that. But there was no harm him playing a game of Ring'em. He went back to the outer room like a man volunteering on a forlorn hope. Mrs. Corder accompanied him bearing the pint glass. The stranger paid his sixpence. There was nothing against him there.

After a long silence, in which every man was looking anywhere but at the stranger, Sam began to talk of that game Tom Shire had played the night before. His diplomacy was clumsy but it introduced the subject.

part of the Downs, but this medium-sized, dark man, whom none had ever seen in that part of the world before, was a marvel.

"You get just short of the number," Sam had whispered in Tom's ear, "and then you hold 'un there—keep missin' 'em—while Jack Honey's gone on his bike to Mavant. The constable'll be here inside an hour to get 'im."

"But how do we know he's got the patch?"

whispered Tom.

"We'll see to that," said Sam, "time you get him well goin' tryin' to ring that last number."

The game started, and in the first hand the stranger had a wash-out.

"Never mind," they said with amiable encouragement. "You stick it, mate. The board's strange to 'ee."

There was never such politeness heard at the Momedan's Head.

Then Tom took the rings and scored twenty-seven. Jim Manning wrote it down in chalk on the slate.

"Duck plays twenty-seven," he said and winked at the young stockman.

"What are you winkin' at?" asked the

stranger

"I never winked!" said Tom tremblingly. It was again the stranger's hand, and from that moment they saw the game which will be remembered at the Momedan's Head for all time. In the next hand he scored fortysix. The rings rattled up against the board and stuck there as if they had been glued. In five hands he wanted but fifteen. Tom Shire was nowhere in it. And it was then, in the last throw when he had scored a thirteen with his first throw and held five more rings to get his two, that Sam Joliff, who bears a record for bravery to this day, lifted the tail of the stranger's long coat as he threw the rings.

There was never a patch at all. It was a new pair of trousers, as good a pair of trousers and even better than the bailiff wore at Squire Woods'.

Sam Joliff let the tail of his coat fall and with the fourth ring the stranger scored his two. He threw the remaining rings on the table and, raising his glass, he swallowed the rest of his pint.

"Well," said Tom Shire, "that's the best

"Well," said Tom Shire, "that's the best beating ever I had. I thought as how I could throw a ring, but I can't throw a ring

like that. Have a pint, mate?"

"Don't mind if I do," said the stranger, and in answer to the bell, Mrs. Corder came in.

"Pint for me and this gentleman, Mrs. Corder."

"What, have you finished?" she exclaimed.

"Finished," they said. "He done it in six throws."

Sam Joliff whispered in her ear and she went out.

"What's that whispering about?" asked

the stranger sharply.

They laughed. First Sam, then Tom, then the young stockman. When Mrs. Corder returned with the pint glasses, the room was a rouse of laughter again.

"It's like this, mate," said Sam. He began his tale about the escape of the criminal

lunatic.

"Killed his wife and his sister-"

"Sister-in-law," corrected Mrs. Corder.

"Sister-in-law, and strangled his father

"With a boot-lace," added Mrs. Corder.

"With a boot-lace. Well—we had the description of him from the Mavant constable—was something like you, with a patch in the seat of his trousers. Don't mind tellin' you we was in two ways of thinking when you come into the room. So we set you on to play a game with Tom there, thinking it 'ud take you all your time to make a score, while one of the boys was going full pelt on his bicycle to Mavant. That's right, isn't it, Mrs. Corder?"

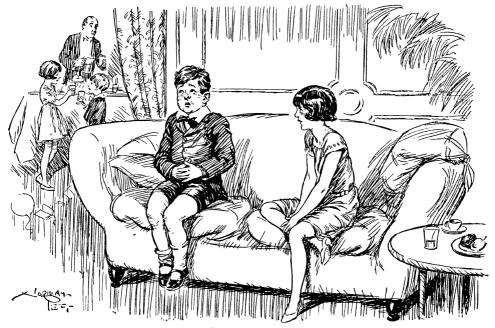
And Mrs. Corder said it was gospel right. "Well, when we sees you winning like that, just to make sure, if you understand my manner of speaking, I lifts up the tail of your coat as you was throwing them last rings and of course we sees—there ain't no patch in your trousers at all." He laughed. "They're new trousies!" He roared with laughter. They all laughed. The stranger threw back his head and laughed with them. They were still laughing as he swallowed his pint and went to the door. He was still laughing with them as he said good night.

They heard him laughing as he ran up the lane. A silence fell on them as they listened. He was still laughing, laughing aloud, laughing alone, as he ran like a bound-

ing hare—up into the hills.

## SOLITUDE.

MAN'S solitude is eternal, and will live beyond the end
When time has stolen his secret, and death has stolen his friend,
When the days he loved are over, and the nights of pain are past,
Then solitude will be with him, to hold his hand at the last.
And whether the smiles of angels shall welcome him from afar
Or another weary journey lie beyond the furthest star,
Though his dearest dreams are broken, and his fairest friendship fail,
Yet solitude dwells within him, and tells him her long long tale.



INFLATED VALUES.

GIRL: I had an indiarubber ball in my stocking. You can blow it up to any size you like. Boy (after Christmas dinner): I wish I had a waistcoat like that!

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

OUR WIRELESS WAITS.

By Herbert Hamelin.

It is rather surprising perhaps that Lavender and I had not previously indulged in the wireless, but we are very conservative and don't hold much with these new-fangled notions. Lavender, however, expressed the desire to have a set for Christmas and—well, there it was.

To be exact, it met me on the doorstep on Christmas Eve on my return from squandering a week's salary on moth-eaten holly and bird-pccked mistletoe. It was in charge of a snuffynosed little boy, who informed me that he had been sent by the Boss "to show me how it worked like." I soon sent him off though. After all, a fellow who has cured a squeaky brake on his Boris car doesn't want to waste a good shilling on a snuffy-nosed little boy just to learn how to work a potty wireless.

We fixed it up and stood before it in admiring awe. Carelessly I twiddled one of the knobbly things, and immediately strange sounds issued from its interior.

"Coo!" murmured Lavender dreamily. "Radio Paris. How lovely to hear the French language again."

"No, darling," I corrected. "That's Madrid. I'm sure I recognise the Spanish accent."

"Twiddle a bit more," urged Lavender.

"Perhaps we shall get it clearer."

I twiddled and we did—there was no doubt

about the accent—best Oxford, with a touch of bronchial catarrh.

"Professor Bogwhistles's next Popular Talk will be 'The Employment of Guano as an Emollient on a Calcareous Subsoil,' "it said.

I twiddled some more and then, very hurriedly, went into reverse.

"What was that, darling?" asked Lavender, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "Berlin?"

"Oh, just something from the Crystal Palace," I answered airily. "Cat Show, probably," I added by way of explanation, "or dogs."

Our machine seemed to have exhausted its energies after that, and nothing emerged but a variety of grunts and wheezes. Personally, I was of the firm opinion that it was Esperanto, but felt diffident in expressing an opinion—things sound so different on the wireless.

Presently I espied another knob which I hadn't twiddled, so I gave it a good hard twiddle.

The result was wonderful—the whole room was flooded with sound. As we sat entranced, holding each other's hands, or rather hand—I had to keep one free for twiddling purposes—we listened to the most soul-stirring rendering of "Good King Wenceslas" I have ever heard. Beautiful? No, perhaps not exactly, but so clear and natural that it sounded just as if the waits were indeed singing outside our own front door. Wonderful thing this wireless.

Just then Mary buzzed in. "Ssh!" I ex-

claimed, holding up my hand to stop her, but her presence appeared to affect our instrument, and all was silence.

"Well, what is it?" I demanded testily, beginning to twiddle all over again.

"Please, sir, it's them carol singers at the door," she explained.

Hastily I disbursed a shilling, and as I peeped through the blind I watched the little band departing. It was headed by a snuffynosed little boy.

I suppose he'ill get another shilling out of me to-morrow too, bless him!



In an East African district a doctor acts as understudy to the magistrate. Recently, when

A coal merchant had advertised for a boy. A red-headed, red-faced boy applied for the job.

"Do you like work?" asked the merchant.

"No, sir," said the boy.

"Then you can have the job. You're the first boy who's been here to-day and hasn't told a lie."



THREE CHILDREN (before their mamma): What do you wish for Christmas, mamma?

MOTHER: All I wish is three sweet and well-behaved little children.

THREE CHILDREN: Well, mamma, then we will be six children.



Why not a Parcel Carrying Husbands Club for the days preceding Christmas?

each was conscious of having broken the law by riding at night without a light, they agreed that the majesty of the law would be best vindicated by each appearing before the other. The magistrate, taking precedence, tried the doctor and fined him five pounds. Then the doctor tried the magistrate and fined him twenty pounds, justifying his severity by pointing out that since this was the second case that day, obviously the offence was becoming too common.



Edna: Dear, I've got something to talk to you about.

HARRY: Good. Usually you want to talk to me about something you haven't got.

Professor's Wife (rushing in): Goodness! Little Della has been drinking all the ink in the ink-bottle. What shall we do?

Professor (absent-mindedly): I'll have to write with a lead pencil, then.



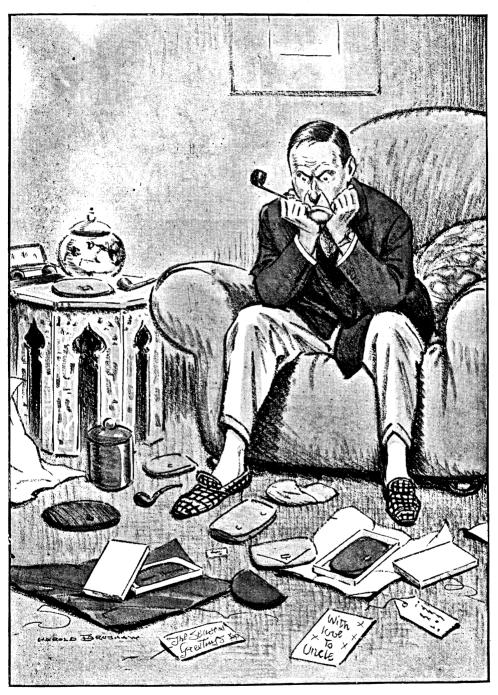
FATHER: I never smoked when I was your age. Will you be able to say that to your son when you are my age?

Son: Not with as straight a face as you do.



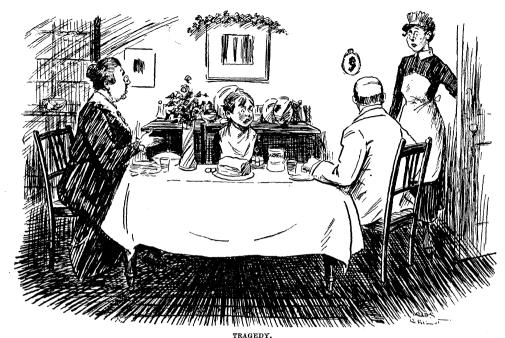
"Your brother is bowlegged, isn't he?"

"Yes; but he's cross-eyed too, so he won't lose his balance."



A MERRY CHRISTMAS INDEED!

The man whose presents consist of two tobacco jars, eight pouches and five pipes finds himself without tobacco!



Maid: Please mum, Fido's gone out.

MISTRESS: What ever does that matter! Bring in the turkey, we're waiting for it.

Maid: Yes, mum, but Fido's got it with him!



UNCLE: I suppose you think your Daddy and I are rather old to be playing with you like this? SMALL GIRL: Oh, no! You both look practic'lly new.

# SECURITY FOR THOSE YOU LOVE

A MAN had been listening to advice on life assurance.

"I'll go home," said he, and talk it over with my wife."

"Don't do that," said his adviser, "talk it over first with another fellow's widow."

Not a cheerful suggestion, perhaps, but life assurance deals with fundamental facts—

O you, a policy taken out with the Prudential Assurance Company means that you will be saving money for your later years and also that your wife and family will be safeguarded should you pre-decease them. It costs little—but it means much. It will give you peace of mind—give them security.

For instance, if you are in your 30th year, an annual premium of £33 os. 10d. will insure your life for £1,000—plus bonus (the amount increases each year), and at the age of sixty you will become entitled to an immediate cheque for £1,660.

This example is based upon present-day bonus conditions.

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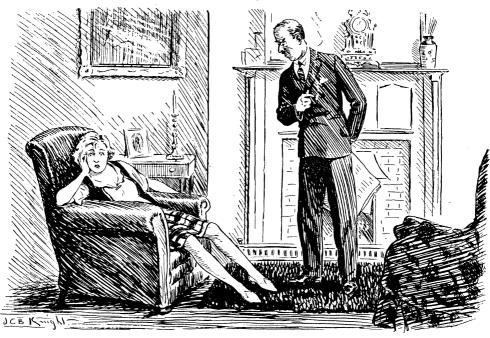
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THE MOTOR PROBLEM AGAIN.

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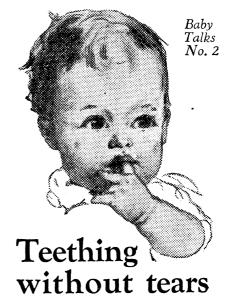
FORCE MAJEURE.

But, my dear girl, what made you ask Aunt Matilda here for Christmas ? " Why, A-Aunt Matilda, of course!"

# Short Cuts to Beauty By MIMOSA

To-day every woman of taste and refinement avoids the use of cosmetics or made-up toilet preparations which give an artificial appearance. The fresh, natural complexion that few women have, and every woman desires, is best obtained by use of original ingredients already at hand or that can be obtained from any reliable chemist. My advice is to avoid the use of most made-up face creams, rouge and beautifying preparations. They are usually obvious and often injurious. If you will get only the proper original ingredients, you will be satisfied with the result. Insist on having just what you ask for. If the chemist hasn't it he can immediately get it from his wholesaler. However, many of my suggestions involve no expense whatever.

- "Discoloured Skin."—Your skin is not sufficiently active to throw off the microscopic particles of dead, discoloured tissue. Get about an ounce of Mercolized Wax and use it at night like a cold cream. Mercolized Wax absorbs the dead outer complexion, revealing the firm, fresh new complexion—a really new skin with natural youthful colour and soundness.
- "Moustache."—Your trouble is a common one, but I beg of you do not think of that "operation." It is intensely painful, often unsatisfactory and very expensive. Get half an ounce of Sipolite—and apply a little to the unsightly hairs. In a few moments they can be rubbed off and the skin will be quite clear. You can use it on your arms as well.
- "Undeveloped Figure."—Three or four coconoids taken each day after meals will develop those graceful curves which lend womanhood its greatest charm. Any chemist will supply them, and the bud—arrested in its growth by lack of glandular vitality—will blossom anew and you will become the woman nature intended you to be.
- "Perspiring."—Toilet powder will not prevent excessive perspiration, but white pergol will immediately stop the very unpleasant odour. Dust the affected surface with it occasionally.
- "Chapped Lips."—It is the lip rouge that makes your lips dry and sensitive to the weather. Rub them with a stick of soft prolactum. It gives them a charming, natural colour and protects them from soreness.
- "Falling, Dry Hair."—Evidently you require a hair tonic. The most effective one I know is simply pure boranium and bay rum. An ordinary package of boranium to ½-pint of bay rum. Rub this well into the roots of the hair and the dandruff will disappear. The hair again becomes soft and glossy, and the growth is stimulated.
- "Weak Nerves."—First of all you must bear in mind that each of the millions of cells, which make up our nervous system, needs food, otherwise it starves. Weak nerves are starved nerves. Iron-Ox tiny tonic tablets keep your blood pure and rich in nerve-strengthening elements. Give them a trial.
- "Thin Skin."—Evidently the soap you are using has too much alkali, a fault of many, even the most expensive, toilet soaps. I use, and can heartily recommend, Pilenta, an English soap that is really soothing to the most sensitive skin and is delightfully perfumed.
- "Natural Bloom."—Your friend probably uses a solution of cleminite instead of powder. Get an ounce and dissolve it in 4 ounces of water and apply it to the face occasionally. You will have a natural "bloom" that cannot be otherwise acquired. The effect will last all the evening, or even all day, without renewing, and cleminite is very beneficial to the skin.
- "Healthy Slimness."—The most convenient method and at the same time the most efficient for the fat person to adopt, is to obtain a few Clynol Berries from the chemist and to swallow one after each meal. They quickly and easily remove all traces of excess fat without exercises, starvation diet or other weakening methods.



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### ON THE CARPET. By Margaret Butcher.

"Women," I remarked, rubbing my shin, "have an extremely rudimentary sense of humour."

"Oh, but you did look most awfully funny, you know!" said Catherine, wiping her eyes with a silly little handkerchief. "If only you could have seen yourself-

"Personally," I replied, "I never could see anything excruciatingly comical in the spectacle of people tripping up on banana skins or-or falling over carpets. Why doesn't George get that beastly thing nailed down, anyway?"

"But if you could have seen-" persisted Catherine.

"The carpet has been like that for years," he concluded, "and nobody has been juggins enough to trip over it, until now. Nevertheless, kindly desist from driving nails into my polished floor, even though it entails danger to life and limb, as you so moderately phrase it. All the same, I would give untold sums to have been present on the regrettable occasion mentioned."

The effect of this note, I hardly need remark, was to hound me into the seclusion of the study for the greater part of the following day. Catherine, like most women, has a slightly irritating way of working a joke to death.

Possibly I should have continued in my policy of aloofness till the evening had I not been con-



KEEPING HIM UP TO THE MARK.

"Mummie, I shall stay awake to see Santa Claus."

"But you mustn't, darling."
"I must, 'cos I want to speak to him."
"Why door?"

"Why, dear?

"I want to tell him that the rabbit he left last year didn't prove reely satisfact'ry."

"I shall write to George about it at once," I interposed. "When I consented to come here and look after your brother's rotten house I did not expect to do it at grave bodily risk, let me tell you." My shin was very painful, for the moment.

"You look after the house? I like that!" Catherine retorted. "And if you can't learn, even at your age, to lift your feet properly-"

"That will do," I said, going in search of

notepaper.

George's reply was prompt and concise; also, it opens up a rather interesting possibility that ideas may run in families, for he went to some trouble to suggest that in my share of education the art of deportment-obviously-had been omitted from the curriculum.

siderably startled by a devastating crash outside the door.

"What on earth . . . ?" I demanded, hurrying to the scene of the disaster.

"It's that abominable carpet," explained Catherine, reassembling herself amidst a hail of broken glass. "Whatever will George say?"

"You are in a mess, my girl," I said, naturally a trifle amused.

"Don't stand there grinning from ear to ear!" replied Catherine. "I hitched my toe in the wretched thing and now you'll have to write and tell George that we've smashed those six pieces of old Waterford glass. I wish I'd never touched them now. He'll be as mad as a hornet."

He was.

"It seems"—he wrote—"that I shall be





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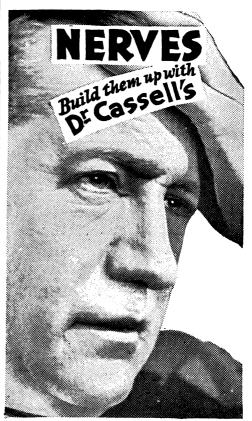
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compelled to countenance tacks in my polished floor, after all, as the supply of buffoons may not be completely exhausted. I can only imagine that you two regard falling over my carpet as a diverting pastime, but I do implore you both, at this juncture, to refrain from further exhibitions of perverted humour. I prized that glass more than anything I have in the house—as Catherine knew quite well. Do not attempt to nail down the carpet, since it might conceivably strike you as a new opportunity for the practical application of wit. I will do it myself when I come back."

We had arranged previously to vacate the house a day or two before George's return with

"Fell?" repeated Catherine. "But where? It doesn't sound a bit like George."

"It appears," I replied, consulting the letter again, "that he 'tripped over a carpet outside the study door."

"I CANNOT marry you"—that was the burden of the young girl's reply to the old millionaire again and again.

Many, many times he had asked her to reconsider her decision, but in the end he despairingly realised that she could never be his. Almost angrily he upbraided her.

Even Cupid," he said, "could do nothing



A SUITABLE DATE.

FRIENDLY DOCTOR: I'm sorry I cannot be with you on Christmas Day, but I shall come over on Boxing Day Hostess and Materfamilias: That will suit us admirably, Doctor.

his family, so we were not able to make our apologies in person. However, I wrote him a letter expressly designed as a scdative, and after a harrowing interval a reply arrived.

"What does George say?" asked Catherine.
"It isn't George; it's Millie," I answered.
Millie is George's wife, chosen—I have always thought—for an entire absence of any sense of humour, perverted or otherwise. "She says that George hasn't written before as he's had a bad foot. Stepped on a tack last week."

a bad foot. Stepped on a tack last week."
"A tack? How?" inquired Catherine, evidently under the impression that there are a variety of ways of stepping on a tack.

"Millie says that he fell and upset the toolbox, to start with," I told her. with you. You're like an iceberg. Why, a hundred cupids might shoot you all day long, but not one arrow would make any impression on your stone-cold heart."

She thought for a moment, then:

"Not if they used an old beau," she replied cuttingly.



Mrs. Muggins: It's raining, and Mrs. Gordon wants to go home, and I have no umbrella to lend her except my new one. Can't I let her have yours?

Mr. Muggins: Hardly. The only umbrella I've got has her husband's name on the handle.

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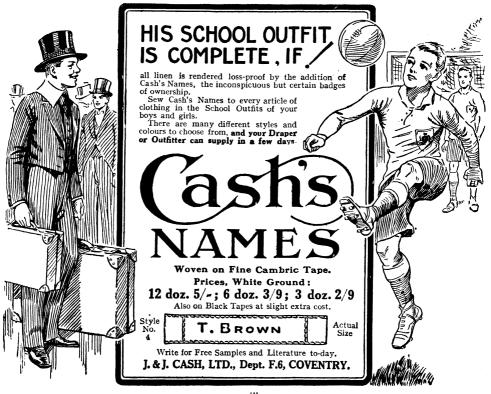
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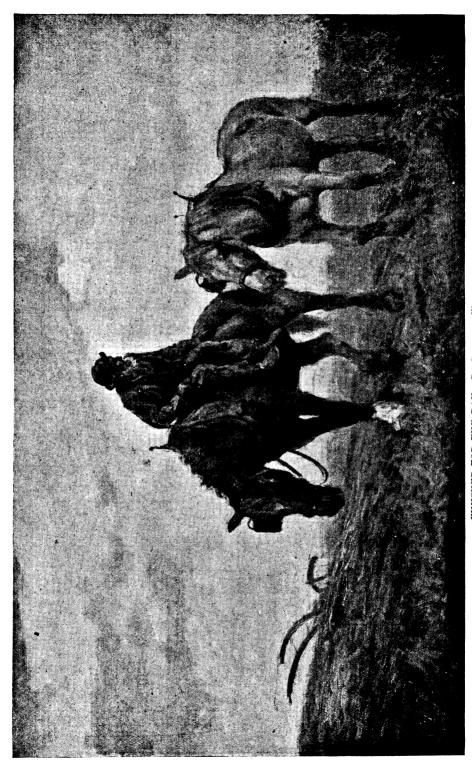
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"'She doesn't believe I shall make Brenda happy.""

# THE DATCHLEY INHERITANCE

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE IMPETUOUS SUITOR

# By STEPHEN McKENNA

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

"NOTWITHSTANDING anything to the contrary contained in my Will I GIVE DEVISE AND BEQUEATH all my real and personal estate to such grandson of mine as shall be the first to marry within twelve calendar months from the date of this Codicil and shall within that period legally adopt the surname of Datchley and shall within six months of his marriage give an Undertaking to reside at Datchley Castle for not less than six calendar months in each year after my death. If there shall be no such grandson then the provisions of my Will shall take effect."

Extract from the codicil to the last will and testament of John Datchley.

N the main arrival-platform at King's Cross, a young man with his hatbrim pulled over his eyes and a muffler swathing his neck and chin tramped to and fro, scrutinizing the faces of the attendant chauffeurs and periodically comparing his watch with the station-clock. The morning was not unduly cold for English spring, but Bryan Abbotsford did not wish

to be recognized; and the Scotch express was not unduly late, but he did not wish to miss even a flutter of Brenda Halliday's handkerchief, as she stood at her window, waiting to leap into his arms.

"'For I'm going to be married to-day,

to-day,

'I'm going to be married to-day,'" he

whistled. "At least I hope I am.

"I hope to be married to-day, to-day," he substituted, then stopped in sudden dread that one of these cultured-looking chauffeurs might be acquainted with the airs of *Iolanthe*. "No point in running risks at the eleventh hour," he told himself.

Bryan knew that he was running an unnecessary risk in coming to meet Brenda at all. On the day when they began to call themselves engaged, Mrs. Halliday, who aspired to make a "great match" for her daughter, had clapped the girl under the protection of the Court of Chancery; and, though Brenda had escaped from her aunts in Scotland for a day's shopping, this would be the last leave of the kind if a member of the widespread Halliday secret-service cabled to Valescure that she had been observed in the company of the detrimental young Mr. Abbotsford.

"If I can shew her that she *must* choose between her mother and me, this will be the last leave that either of us will require," he

reflected.

Seating himself on an inviting milk-can, Bryan marshalled his arguments. The first was a marriage-licence available for that day, the second a list of sailings to Halifax, the third an illustrated prospectus of alluring fruit-farms in British Columbia. A dog's-eared, month-old letter from Messrs. Plimsoll, Mackworth and Plimsoll, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, informed the recipient that his grandfather, Mr. John Datchley, had made him an unconditional gift of five thousand pounds. A later letter, written after the old man's death, requested Bryan's attendance at the solicitors' office that afternoon to hear the will read. And, encasing the other papers—a grim curiosity for Brenda to see-, was a photograph of the shrivelled autocrat who-till a month ago -had waged implacable war against his daughters and their children. Even in death John Datchley seemed unforgiving. If the solicitor was to be believed, he cared less about helping his grandsons than about tempting them to their undoing.

"If I'm quodded for eloping with a ward in Chancery, he'd feel he was getting value for his five thousand," Bryan mused. "On the other hand, if it enables me to get clear away to British Columbia, we shall have the laugh of him."

He sprang off his milk-can as the train appeared in sight. A handkerchief fluttered from a window at the back. And, while the other passengers were still shouting for porters and signalling for taxis, Bryan was hurrying into the station hotel and guiding Brenda to the table where breakfast was awaiting them.

"Everything's arranged," he informed her without loss of time. "If you'll say how soon you can be ready, I'll see about our passages."

Brenda glanced through the packet of papers which he was thrusting at her and made a cautious survey of the dining-room. Though her presence in London was an act of surrender, she did not mean her surrender to be unconditional.

"You're in a tremendous hurry!" she

laughed.

"I want to make sure of you!"

"But I've said I'll marry you; and you can't think I shall change my mind. I only want to avoid doing anything we shall regret later. I shall be of age in September, Bryan. Even if mother doesn't give her consent when she hears about your legacy, we could be married then . . . "

Bryan shook his head:

"When we told her of the engagement, she retaliated by making you a ward of Court. If we told her about the five thousand, she'd cart you off on a voyage round the world. Once we're married, she can't unmarry us . . . "

"But she'd never forgive me if I married without telling her," the girl answered

unhappily.

To wait until September did not seem a great hardship; and, if she resisted Bryan's suggestion of a secret marriage, it was because she knew it must be followed by a secret flitting. Mrs. Halliday had made up her mind that he was an idler, perhaps a fortune-hunter; and, if she discovered that he had outwitted her, she was quite capable of sending even her own son-in-law to prison.

"You can tell her when it's all over," said

Bryan.

Brenda shook her head:

"If I go through with this business today, you must swear that you won't tell anybody. I know mother . . . If I have to choose between her and you, I suppose I must choose you. . . . It will take me some time to get all my clothes. . . . You oughtn't to book our passages for another fortnight. . . . I wish I thought we were going to make a success of our fruit-farming!" she ended dismally.

"You may be sure I don't want to go abroad if we can arrange to stay in jolly old England," Bryan answered. "Why not tell your mother and hang the consequences?"

"Would you be ready to 'hang the consequences' if I were the one who had to

go to prison?"

"My dear, she's not going to make a scandal for the fun of the thing! However . . . I want to arrange about this afternoon. Plimsoll is collecting us all to hear my grandfather's will read . . ."

"This afternoon? Ought we to take the final step until you've seen him?" the

girl enquired uncertainly.

"If we wait for that, we can't be married to-day. If we're not married to-day, we must wait for a new licence. If we wait for a new licence, your mother will be back in England and our chance may be gone for ever. After all, there can't be much in what Plimsoll says about the conditions on which the residue of the estate is to go. He told me it was long odds against my touching another penny; and, if the old man was leaving me anything more, he'd have said so in this letter. No, I've cashed in my five thousand; and, as soon as we've had a spot of wedding-breakfast, I shall buy a book on fruit-farming and see about our passages. I won't tell anybody! On my honour! When you're ready . . . "

"I wish you weren't so impetuous!"

Brenda sighed.

"After all these years?"

Pushing the toast to her side of the table, Bryan pressed her hand.

"The waiter!" she whispered.

He only laughed. Any one that troubled to look their way must have taken them for brother and sister. They had the same blue eyes and corn-coloured hair, the same dazzling smile and impudent gaiety. At first glance, indeed, it was hard to say which was the boy and which the girl. Both wore silk collars and loose ties, tweed coats and vivid woollen jumpers. Brenda's hair was in the state of repentance that sometimes follows shingling; the length of Bryan's, like his temperament, was explained by those who knew his record by the fact that his father had been an unsuccessful artist.

"Some one told me your grandfather was worth about four millions," said Brenda

with waning resistance. "If you lost that simply through being in a hurry . . . "

"I should say you were cheap at the price," Bryan replied, as he felt in his pocket for the box containing the weddingring.

#### II.

Two hours later a transformed couple met, as though by chance, near the Hudson memorial.

"Hullo! I haven't seen you since breakfast!" Bryan exclaimed. "I adore that frock!"

"I don't look like a bride, do I?" Brenda

enquired anxiously.

"Do I look like a fruit-farmer? No! My brother told me he'd never seen any one less like. By the way, what about getting old Martin to be my best man?"

"And let him into our secret?"

"We shall want some witnesses," said Bryan, looking with disfavour on the sauntering nursemaids and deliberate businessmen who thronged the Park at this hour. "Martin can be quite discreet . . ." He broke off in sudden excitement and pointed to a stout figure, who was dawdling ahead of them in a tall hat and white waistcoat. "I know that fellow and he don't know me! A distinguished architect. Friend of old Plimsoll's. Just the lad to swear everything's in order if your mother tries to pretend it wasn't a valid marriage."

Motioning Brenda to await him, he hurried in pursuit of the disappearing broad back of his unsuspecting witness. With the smile that won him a hearing when a more deserving man would have been sent packing, he addressed the startled architect by name, stated his business and waited till a sudden twinkle shewed him that his audacity had once again succeeded. Thereafter Mr. George Simnel, A.R.I.B.A., trotted unprotestingly at heel from Hyde Park to his office, from his office to the registrar's and from the registrar's to the Gloucester grillroom, where Bryan thanked him with emotion, promised to do him a similar service at any time and betrayed honest regret when his witness revealed that he was already married.

"And now," said Mr. Simnel, "may I ask how you came to know my name?"

"I've seen you, sir, when I've been calling on my solicitor," Bryan answered.

"You have a solicitor? Then tell me why you so far honoured me . . . "

"The marriage has to be kept secret for

a time," Bryan answered soberly. "To put the thing in a nutshell, sir, I've been as poor as a church-mouse all my life; and Brenda's mother refused to regard me as a suitable husband for her daughter. . . . I think a little champagne, sir?"

"I abhor it in the middle of the day," replied Mr. Simnel, "but I believe it to be the standard beverage for church-mice."

"Next to lemon-juice and tonic-water, it's the most wholesome drink in the world," Bryan declared. "And lemon-juice is fatal, if you suffer from acidity. Besides, one doesn't get married every day, unless one's a super-film-star. Well, Brenda and I agreed there was nothing for it but to wait till she was of age. The wine is to your liking?"

"The next bottle might remain perhaps seven minutes longer on the ice," Mr. Simnel

answered. "Yes?"

"Within a week of our decision," Bryan continued, "my life was entirely changed. My grandfather, who had previously disowned his entire family, was stricken with senile dementia; and, before his affairs could be put into other hands, he had presented me with five thousand pounds in cash. Why? you ask. We shall never know. It was not a single aberration, for he did the same to my brothers and cousins. And it was not a recurrent mania, for he had not repeated this odd exhibition when he died. A month ago, that was . . ."

"And does much of the five thousand remain?" asked Mr. Simnel, with more

interest than malice.

Bryan swallowed his second glass of cham-

pagne in haste to justify himself.

"Enough to give me my opportunity," he answered, with a touch of pride. I'm richer to-day than I was a month ago. Five thousand. I thought of buying a car, but the one I wanted cost fourteen hundred pounds and I didn't feel entitled to spend that. Fourteen hundred pounds saved. That's six thousand four hundred. Then my cousin Arthur offered me five hundred one-pound shares in a concern which I considered a pure ramp. I wouldn't touch it. And I shouldn't be surprised if Arthur found himself in the dock. That's six thousand nine hundred. Oh, I know I'm supposed to have no money-sense, but that's only because I've never had any money. Give me some; and I'll shew you what I can do with it. Give me a chance in life; and I'll shew you what I can make of it. D'you know, sir, the first thing I did when I got that money? I called on my solicitor to know what the catch was; and, on my way, I passed through Covent Garden. I saw great big boxes of bananas and apples and bananas and, er, bananas. I'd never realized how much fruit we consumed. That set me thinking. Bananas aren't indigenous to this country, sir. Before you can eat them, you must ship them. Before you can ship them, you must grow them. I decided to take up fruit-farming. Just like that! Is the champagne cold enough now, sir?"

As Brenda's glass remained almost untouched, Mr. Simnel watched with interest to see what his now voluble host considered an adequate mid-day allowance for two

men liable to acidity.

"It is admirable," he murmured. "Was it the five thousand—which is only about three hundred a year net, you know—, or that novel means of increasing your capital, or the inspiration about the fruit-farm that overcame Mrs. Halliday's prejudices?"

In the silence that followed, Brenda's fair cheeks might have been observed to colour; and Bryan began to enquire that every one would like to eat after the vol-

ıu-vent.

"Mother was abroad. She still is," said Brenda with a gulp.

"I presume, though . . . "

Bryan took it upon himself to answer for the two of them:

"No, sir, she was too likely to turn me down again. She thinks I'm unsteady. She doesn't believe I shall make Brenda happy. We decided to rush things through before she could stop us. Don't you think we were right, sir?"

Mr. Simnel shrugged his shoulders and sought a means of evading the question.

"Does your mother live abroad?" he asked Brenda.

"She's only been wintering on the Riviera."

"Will you write and tell her what you've done or wait till she comes back?"

"We aren't telling any one at present," Bryan answered. "It's too late for anybody to say anything now—always barring vulgar abuse—; and, before Mrs. Halliday leaves Valescure, we shall have disappeared quietly to the fruit-farm. Now you understand the need for secrecy."

#### $\mathbf{III}$

MR. SIMNEL flung up his hands in helpless agony, as though he realized for the first

time his complicity in the crimes of the engaging young people who were at this moment motioning one waiter to fill his glass and another to offer him the vol-

au-vent again.

"This won't do, you know!" he exclaimed. "I've a wife and children of my own. If my daughter . . . If a man who'd eaten my salt . . . And in addition to hurting Mrs. Halliday you'll hurt yourselves. You'll feel mean, deceitful. You'll have to recognize later that one of your first bonds was the bond of a common fear. I take it you are afraid ? "

Though his question contained a taunt, Mr. Simnel was interested to observe that

it roused no resentment.

"Not of her, entirely," Bryan answered with deliberation. "If she lets the cat out of the bag, though . . . "

"I don't follow! It's no one else's

business!"

Bryan sent for the wine-list and studied the pages devoted to liqueurs before attempt-

ing to answer.

"Technically, the Lord Chancellor . . . ," he began lightly. "I should have explained, perhaps, that Brenda is a ward in Chancery."

Mr. Simnel's eye-glass fell with a tinkle

that made his neighbours start.

"And you married her without leave?" he enquired in a whisper. "My young friend, do you know the penalty for that?"

"I know it's contempt of court," Bryan answered. "And my solicitor . . . "

"Oh, you consulted your solicitor?

Amazing youth!"

"He told me I was liable to be popped into prison till I'd 'purged' my 'contempt'. I asked him how long that took, but he couldn't tell me. It seems to depend on what sort of temper the Court's in that morning."

Mr. Simnel looked at his watch and

shifted impotently in his chair:

"May I ask if any one else is affected by this marriage? Is it in any one's interest

to expose you?"

"Mercifully, no," sighed Bryan. "And we shall lie like horse-copers if any one asks us. We're putting out a feeler by telling Mrs. Halliday about my legacy. If she changes her mind about me, we can be married publicly. If she doesn't, we only ask you to say nothing till Brenda comes of age. We don't want to run away, but I want even less to begin my married life in prison. We're in your hands absolutely."

Half an hour later the protracted weddingbreakfast came to an end; and Bryan arrived at his solicitor's office to find his brothers and cousins assembled in force and Mr. Plimsoll taking a census of their names, ages and occupations.

"Abbotsford. Bryan. Twenty-four," he announced when his turn came. "Sorry to be late, sir: I've been talking to a man

about fruit-farming."

Mr. Plimsoll looked from the clock to the flushed cheeks and bright eyes of the newcomer, sniffing incredulously:

"Occupation?"

"Fruit-farmer . . , Didn't I explain

"'Occupation: none'," Mr. Plimsoll recorded in his notes. "'Married or single'?"

"Single."

The solicitor motioned him to an empty chair and began to read from a type-written statement, while Bryan studied his neighbours. They were all there! His own brothers, Martin, Roger and Luke; Peter Fairfax and his cranky brother Hilary; the three Gauntletts. They were also, Bryan observed, receiving with funereal solemnity the news that Gaffer Datchley had by his last will left everything to charity, though this was precisely what Brenda had been told to expect; and they were pricking up their ears like famished dogs when the solicitor began to talk about a codicil. Much good it would do them! Bryan reflected sleepily. Mr. Plimsoll himself had said that the odds were about ten to one against...

He jerked himself awake at a kick from Peter Fairfax and, converting a snore into a cough, discovered that Mr. Plimsoll was still talking. Gaffer Datchley, he was saying, had apparently not realized until his last days that his name was likely to die with him; and, apprehending belatedly that his grandsons were perhaps hardly in a position to marry, he had decreed, as a first step towards perpetuating the family, that each was to be presented with a sum of five

thousand pounds. . . .

"How pleased he'd be," Bryan mused, "if he knew how prompt I'd been! Pity he didn't live another few weeks! We might have touched him for a canteen of silver or a pruning-knife as a wedding-present . . ."

He was reduced to gravity by the voice of Mr. Plimsoll, who was now reading so clearly and slowly that he must obviously be reaching his climax. Under the codicil the estate was placed in trust for the heir, who would have to take his grandfather's name and to reside for half the year at Datchley; and the heir would be that one of all the grandsons who married first within twelve months of the execution of the will. "Within twelve months . . . ," one or two voices were repeating in a whisper. the execution of the will . . . ," others were echoing. Then some one ended a distressing silence by observing nervously that the terms were at any rate explicit enough.

twelve . . . ? Bryan Within pressed his fists against his temples and stared at a framed calendar on the opposite wall. was awake; and his head was clear; but he was glad that his face was half hidden. Within twelve . . .

"That one who within twelve calendar months of the execution of the will . . . ," the solicitor was repeating.

"Money for jam!" Bryan whispered to himself, then bit his lip for fear that the whisper had been overheard.

### IV.

Again for several minutes no one spoke. They were all nervous, Bryan saw, but he was ready to swear that no one else had his The cap fitted almost too perfectly! Of nine men it was necessary that one should be married; and he was the one. It was necessary that he should be married not earlier than the execution of the will, not later than twelve months afterwards. It was necessary that he should be married before any of the others. And then . . . And then . . . Brenda had said only that morning that Gaffer Datchley was supposed to be worth about four million. People exaggerated; but if it was three or even two . . .

The diffident silence had broken; and Bryan heard whispered consultations on either side of him. His brother Martin, soured misogynist, was saying that he would not share his life with a woman for twice the money. Luke, who was never happy off a committee, was trying to make a committee of this meeting and to get every one's approval of a pooling scheme under which there should be at least a handsome consolation-prize for the unsuccessful candidates (" Not on your life !-" said Bryan). Cousin Hilary, who dissected frogs and brewed unholy compounds in testtubes, was waxing indignant that the money had not been left to endow scientific research. . . .

Slowly, Bryan drew his five-hour-old certificate from his pocket. Less slowly, he thrust it back. It was awkward that he had assured old Plimsoll so recently that he was still unmarried. How would these fellows take the news?

Whether they liked it or not, they would have to believe it, but they would be sore with him for fostering hopes at one moment and dissipating them all the next. They would not see that it was no laughing-matter to defy the Court of Chancery. They would only feel that they had, one and all, been cheated of the millions that were to rescue them for ever from their banks and offices and class-rooms. A warning of what he might expect when he sprang his mine was given by a subtile stiffening and remoteness of manner. The whispering groups were dissolving. Every man was now for himself. Every man, in a sense, seemed to be clearing for action.

While he pondered diplomatic methods of breaking the news, Bryan discovered that his opportunity was gone. Those who sat farthest from Mr. Plimsoll were edging nearer to the door. Every one was watching his neighbour; and two or three already seemed to be throwing suspicious glances in his direction, as though they would not readily forgive him for quashing Luke's suggested "pool". An ill-timed word would range them in a solid, vindictive phalanx against him. And really, Bryan decided, there was no need to run risks. The most eager suitors could not be married for several weeks. If he held his tongue, there was a good chance that Mrs. Halliday would have returned to England before any of his brothers or cousins could file their claims: and Bryan had no doubt that she would withdraw her opposition when she heard the terms of the will. . . .

"And now I will bid you a very good-day." He roused to find that Mr. Plimsoll had finished at last. He found, too, that the others were hurrying out of the room and down the stairs almost as though they expected to find wives paraded under the trees of Lincoln's Inn Fields. Following unhurriedly, he fell in with his brother Luke, who complimented him ironically on his courage.

"You're so sure of Brenda," he mocked, "that you don't think the rest of us are worth considering?"

"Mrs. Halliday ought to relent when she hears about this will," Bryan replied cautiously.

"Still, the pool would have secured you against accidents. You'll feel rather foolish if some one beats you on the post."

"I have a pretty long start."

"But it will take a week or two for you to fix things up with Mrs. Halliday, a week or two more to get the consent of the Court, three weeks to acquire a domicile. By the way, I don't recommend you to try short cuts. If you marry Brenda without leave, we shan't hesitate to inform against you. Of course, you must decide for yourself, but it's eight to one against."

"How many will go to the post, though? Martin has taken a toss already; Hilary only got out of an entanglement with one of his students by gassing about the marriage of the unfit. He can't go back on that now. You . . . I've never looked on

vou as a marrying man."

"Then you'd better begin now," Luke

suggested.

May I enquire who is being favoured?" "To be quite frank, I don't yet know."

"That makes it rather difficult," said Bryan.

Luke smiled to himself and beat his cane

against the side of his leg:

"Do you really think so ? How romantic you are. Bryan! If I wanted to be in love, it would be another story; but as I only require to get married . . . You see how important it is to keep an open mind? If Phyllida flouts me at luncheon, I can propose to Chloe at dinner. Now you, being in love with Brenda, cannot in decency try elsewhere, if she turns you down . . . "

"But if Phyllida accepts you?" asked Bryan. "If you're not in love with her, it's rather a grim prospect. I presume you won't explain that you're making a

convenience of her?"

"I must remember to say something about her personal charms. Women are touchy . . . "

"Have you considered what it would be like to spend the rest of your life tied to a

woman you don't love?"

"But I've no intention of doing that," Luke answered, smiling to his reflection in a shop-window. "My innocent lad, marriages may be made in heaven, but they can be dissolved on earth. No doubt you think me a cynic . . . "

Bryan shrugged his shoulders without answering. Though they criticized each other frankly, he was fond of his flippant brother and would be sorry to see him spoil-

ing his life to no purpose.

"You can't make her divorce you unless she wants to," he pointed out. "After remembering to say something about her

personal charms' . . . "

"I shall demonstrate to her," Luke interrupted, "that marriage is a lottery. If, I shall say, our marriage should turn out a failure, would it not be best to end it amicably? The settlement will make plain that my wife will be handsomely solaced for the loss of my unworthy self. . . . Are you by any chance acquainted, Bryan, with Miss Mimi Westermayne?"

"The film-star? I saw her in Love and

"But you know nothing of her private life? It is worth studying. She has been married more often than any actress on the same salary-plane in the whole of California. About that there is no doubt at all. A year or two ago, I admit, an impostor set up a rival claim, but it was established to the satisfaction of the best brains in Hollywood that, while the impostor may technically have gone through a form of marriage more often than Miss Westermayne, some of these marriages had been concurrent and could therefore not be counted. Mimi, on the other hand, has always been scrupulously off with the old love before she is on with the new. Now, it is fashionable among the frivolous to make jokes about film-actresses and divorce. I beg that you, Bryan, will refrain . . . '

If I thought you were serious," Bryan interrupted uneasily, "I'd come into your pooling-scheme just to save

The longer he reviewed his own position, the more uncomfortably he realized that for the first time in his life he was looking upon the law from the standpoint of a transgressor. Hitherto he had regarded policemen as comic but benevolent creatures who controlled traffic and told country cousins their way about London; he had never imagined that one of them might call at his mother's house with a warrant. These other fellows would have to be

"Too late now," Luke answered. "The others are hard at work already. And we oughtn't to be wasting time, Bryan. It would be irritating if Hilary, say, dashed in ahead of us with a bony, spectacled researcher on his arm. Good-bye!"

As he turned with a wave of his hand,

Bryan caught him by the arm.

"Where are you going?" he cried.

"To the Florida Hotel," Luke answered. "Miss Westermayne . . . "

"You're not in earnest!," Bryan gasped.
"A woman like that . . ."

"When you are my age," Luke returned, "you will know better than to speak ill of any woman. You can never be sure when you may find yourself chastely saluting her as your sister-in-law."

to substantiate the story that she had gone to London for a day's shopping;



"'WHEN you come to the end of a perfect day . . . '," Bryan whistled drearily, as he made his way to King's Cross.

It seemed more than twelve hours since he had hurried on to the platform, fifty minutes before Brenda's train was due, to watch for the flutter of her handkerchief. to catch her in his arms as she sprang down, to convince himself that she was really come, that they were really going to be married . . Now she was returnthat morning. ing to Scotland, with a mountain of parcels and they must plan their next movements.

"Darling! I thought you were never coming!" Brenda cried.

"I couldn't get here any sooner," Bryan answered. "A good deal has happened since last I saw you. I don't quite know where to begin."

"You can begin by saying whether everything's all right! Mr. Plimsoll doesn't suspect? You haven't told any one?"

"I've lied consistently and, I think, convincingly," he replied with a touch of bitterness.

"And have you arranged about our

passages?"

"We shan't want them now. In fact," he continued, half to himself, "I think Plimsoll said we had to spend six months of the year in Scotland . . . Did I tell

explain by word of mouth than by letter . . . "

Brenda relieved him of his hat and handed it to a waiter.

"If you don't do better than this, she won't understand any more than I do. I



you about the name? he asked Brenda. "We shall have to call ourselves Datchley. . . . I'm wondering if it wouldn't be best for me to go out and beard your mother at Valescure. It's easier and quicker to

haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about, Bryan!"

They were at the door of the dining-room;

and, as the head-waiter conducted them to a table, Bryan looked giddily about him.

"I'll telling you about the old man's will," he answered. "There's been a pretty considerable change in our condition since we breakfasted here this morning. Would you be surprised to hear that I'm many times a millionaire, for one thing . . . ?"

"Darling, be serious!"

Bryan turned upon her so fiercely that she was convinced in spite of herself.

"The old man left every last shilling to the grandson who married first after the will was signed! And you afraid I might injure my prospects by being in a hurry! I didn't tell 'em, of course, what I'd done! They'll want my blood when they find out. Everything will be absolutely all right if we win your mother over or if you come of age before any one else puts in a claim. If we have to produce evidence of the marriage, though, we're in the cart. The others will go for me like tiger-cats. Luke said so! I shall languish in prison till further notice..."

"Then we won't produce the evidence," Brenda answered promptly. "I can be ready in a fortnight, darling. If we go to

Canada . . . '

"To fulfil the old man's conditions, I must spend half the year at Datchley," said Bryan.

"But I don't care tuppence about his conditions! We agreed to run away . . . "

"We didn't know about the will then."
"I don't care tuppence about the will."
"You weren't exactly keen on fruit-

farming."

"But I said I'd face it for your sake," Brenda returned hotly. "I wasn't exactly keen on quarrelling with mother, but I had to choose between you. I'm not going back on that, Bryan. Nor are you. If you think I'd let you go to prison for the sake of this wretched money . . . "

"Tell me what you're going to eat," said Bryan, seizing the *menu* in desperation.

"We must come to an understanding first," said Brenda, with a determination that reminded him of her imperious mother. "I was willing that you should put out a feeler over the legacy, but it's too late for that now. It's too late to dangle this will in front of mother. I've no doubt she'd give her consent quickly enough, but all the others will be having a go for it now. If Luke claims the money, you'd insist on claiming against him. It would all come out. And they would turn on you like tiger-cats."

Bryan struggled to control his impatience:

"But you can't let four million go

begging?"

"We shall have to, if that's the price of

peace and quiet."

Their waiter was still hovering, with a bill of fare in one hand and a wine-list in the other. Bryan ordered at random and then described his conversation with Luke as they walked away from Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was, of course, grotesque to talk of giving up the money; but he must make Brenda see, as he was himself coming slowly to see, that they could not remain silent indefinitely.

"If he rolls up with his film-star . . . ,"

he explained.

"That's his look-out," Brenda answered

implacably.

"But I can't let them commit themselves blind! My dear, when the meeting broke up, you couldn't see these fellows for dust . . . "

"Well, that's no affair of yours! You're not competing. Since mid-day, my dear, your first duty is to me. Of course, if the money's more important to you...," she added, stung to tartness by his failure to answer.

I said you'd be cheap at four million, but there's no point in chucking good money

away . . . "

"Good money'!" Brenda echoed. "When I had to choose between mother and you, I let mother go. When you have to choose between the money and me . . ."

"For heaven's sake don't put it like that," Bryan interrupted; and he groaned as he remembered the solicitor's cynical suggestion that their grandfather had left his money as a bait to lure them to their own destruction. "We're playing the old man's game too disastrously well if we

quarrel over a thing like this."

They were still arguing when dinner came to an end and they hurried to the train. By now Brenda was repeating bitterly that Bryan was a Datchley at heart and cared only for money; with cold and wounding detachment Bryan was informing the heavens that he had never expected his wedding-day to turn out like this; and at intervals each reminded the other that this was what old Datchley would have loved to see and that he was beating them from the other side of the grave.

"All for a few miserable pounds," said

Brenda with a catch in her voice.

"A few million pounds," Bryan corrected her. "And it's for your sake as much as mine. I want you to have all that money can buy . . ."

"And I only want you! I'd sooner starve than live in luxury while you were in

prison!"

"I hope it won't come to that. If we bolt, though, we lose all chance of inheriting. It can't do any harm just to wait. With any luck, you'll be of age or your mother will come round and we can have a public wedding before the others put in a claim."

A guard hurried along the platform, urging the laggards into their places.

"But if they do?" Brenda asked, as she

climbed to her compartment.

"I must use my discretion," said Bryan.

"Perhaps I could buy 'em off . . . "

"But you promised on your honour that you wouldn't tell a living soul! If you breathe a word, I shall know that you put the money before me."

"That's not true, Brenda!"

"But it is! And you'll have to choose between it and me. If you choose the money, I shall be very glad, of course, to help you. Anything that Miss Westermayne does for your brother I'll cheerfully do for you, but we won't pretend that you care for me, and, as soon as we decently can, we'd better end things . . . "

Bryan fell back in dismay at the cold

venom of her tone.

"For heaven's sake don't talk like that!"

he exclaimed.

"Well, will you swear by all you hold sacred that you won't tell any one till I give you leave?"

The guard hurried by, calling "Stand

back, please!"
"I won't do anything without letting

you know," Bryan compromised.

"You won't give me that promise?""
Brenda persisted.

"Darling, I must keep my hands free!

You know me well enough  $\dots$  "

"I don't feel I know you at all! This morning I thought I did. You wanted me then, you were ready to run away to the other end of the world. Since you heard of this wretched money, I've been pushed into second place . . ."

She caught at the side of the door as the

train started with a jolt.

"Gaffer Datchley seems to be scoring," Bryan muttered.

"You've assisted him so ably! I... think I'd better give you this! Good-

bye."

He was beginning to run along the platform when she stopped him by tossing a small box out of the window. Bryan recognized the case as the one that had contained her wedding-ring. Before he could open it, she had withdrawn from sight.

After looking vainly for the flutter of a handkerchief, he turned on his heel and walked out of the station. Hailing a taxi, he drove to the grill-room of the Diplomats' Club, whistling lugubriously to himself. Luke must be squared. Luke must get him out of his difficulties. . . . The whistling ended abruptly when he discovered that the air which had been haunting him all day was still running in his head.

"'I'm going to be married to-day, to-day, 'I'm going . . . 'Oh, my stars!"

Bryan groaned.

## Hereafter follows the Adventure of the Disappointed Cynic.

## THE BLOSSOMING.

In the drowned garden day by day
The trampling rain has had its way,
And ever, from a heart in pain,
My tears kept pace with the cold rain.
Now not a bud has stirred, to bring
The faintest memory of Spring;
No bird essayed a tentative note;
No sun-gleam pierced the sky's grey coat;
No cloud thinned, even for an hour—
But suddenly my heart's in flower.
Weep if you will, sad heavens outside!
My tears are dried, my tears are dried.

# THE GATEWAY

# By JOAN SUTHERLAND

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

■ LIZABETH stood by the long-suffering two-seater and patted it affec-brother's with a smile.

"You need not worry in the least, I shall be all right," she assured him. "After all, I knew when I came to you that I'd

have to be alone sometimes."

"But Christmas!" Bill Dunscombe said. "To leave you the day before Christmas Eve your first year out! It's a darned

shame."

"It can't be helped. M'wembo will look after me and the place, and you said you'd ask your friend Captain Bracksley to be here by to-night."

"He'll be here. I sent word, and I'll call on my way. Don't go straying too far around, and if there should be anything bothering you take M'wembo and ride over to the Northways. They'll keep you."

Elizabeth nodded, but, disliking Mrs. Northway, who was the nearest white neighbour some miles away, privately determined to do nothing of the kind, and her brother guessed as much and would not press her as he did not like the lady either. He hated leaving his sister on the place, but he had been sent for urgently to headquarters fifty miles away: there was no disputing a command from his chief and no possibility of taking Elizabeth with him. He had debated dropping her with the Northways but she had begged to be left at home, and since he knew he should not be away more than a few days, he had compromised by sending to his friend Captain Bracksley to come up the same night and stay till he returned. For the one day Elizabeth would be all right, for M'wembo, the head boy, was entirely trustworthy, and Elizabeth had her Colt, in the use of which she was proficient. So that was that and Bill Dunscombe drove away not light-heartedly but at least with comparative ease of mind.

When the noise of the car had died away Elizabeth went slowly back into the shade of the verandah and stood looking about her—at the garden patch a little way off where two "boys" were working, at the bare sun-baked parade ground away to the left, with the flagpole's Union Jack drooping motionless in the still hot air—a symbol that here in this lonely West African country made her nerves thrill. By which it will be known that Elizabeth was young, enthusiastic and full of unspoilt ideas, despite

her post-war modernity.

This post of her brother's was some way up the river and twenty-five miles as the crow flies and about fifty by the customary mode of human traffic from Fort M'beni, and there were ten Houssas and a sergeant under his command, and both the sergeant and his own "boy" M'wembo were trustworthy and loyal to the last breath—Bill had had reason to know it more than once. and he did not fear to leave his sister for the one day under their protection. M'wembo's opinion of his fellow who looked sideways at a white woman was like the sergeant's, untranslatable.

So Elizabeth, who was new enough to the country to be thrilled by the mere fact of being in it, spent the remainder of the morning very happily; took a short walk in the late afternoon and visited the native village where she had already made friends with some of the women and all the fat, bloomily-black babies, had tea very comfortably on the verandah and watched with some apprehension for Bill the approach of a storm across the river. First the sun disappeared behind layers of haze, then through the haze gigantic thunder-heads loomed upward, copper-tinged and mountainous, then little shreds of grey cloud detached from the main bulk scurried wisp-like across the blue and a wind coming from nowhere moaned through the forest and bent the tree-tops, which shivered, swayed, then once again stood very still.

It was already getting dusk and Elizabeth found herself wondering if Captain Bracksley would arrive before it broke or if he would be detained and perhaps stopped altogether

but M'wembo assured her that there were plenty of friendly villages where he could get shelter.

"It is a great storm, but not of the greatest," M'wembo said solemnly, but he closed the windows nevertheless and fastened down all loose gear, lighting the lamps since

and the sharp click of the latch, audible by its different note from the noise without, made her swing round to see a man standing just inside the room, panting and drenched.

He was a tall man, and the rain dripped

He was a tall man, and the rain dripped from him as he stood there, making a pool about him on the floor, and in that first moment of surprise Elizabeth hardly noticed

but the storm, till the wild flicker of the lamps



With the first flash she changed her mind, since a storm such as this was worth watching, and the scream of the wind, the crashing of the thunder and the roar of rain on the corrugated-iron roof, added to the constant blue glare of the lightning, took her into a world such as she had never experienced—a world of noise and darkness and flashing, eye-searing light—a chaos—and excitement set nerves quivering and took all her attention so that she heard nothing, saw nothing,

that his clothes were torn and stained as if he had fought his way through the forest, but she did see that he was bronzed and good-looking, although his face bore a look of strain and weariness, and it was evident that he had not shaved that day. Just for a second she stared; then, realising who it must be, she came quickly forward and held out her hand.

"Why, Captain Bracksley!" she said, "you have arrived in all this frightful storm. What an awful time you must have had. You are drenched; and look, your coat is all torn."

For a moment he did not speak, but just stood and looked at her, and she realised that he had very blue eyes, and that his face, despite its look of haggard weariness, which she now noticed, was quite distinctly handsome. He was a big man, broad-shouldered and lean, and there was an air of recklessness, almost of gaiety, in his look as he stood and stared at her. Puzzled, she spoke again.

"I'm Elizabeth," she said. "I suppose we must introduce ourselves, but of course Bill told me you were coming. I feel very guilty, fetching you all these miles just to stay with me these five days, especially in this storm. Bill assured me you wouldn't mind, but I think I would have been perfectly all right alone."

The newcomer flashed a glance at her left hand; then, almost as he pulled himself together he spoke, and his voice was pleasant, though with some accent she did not recognise for the moment in it.

"I assure you I'm delighted," he said.
"Bill will be away five days?"

The remark was a question, and Elizabeth nodded.

"Yes, didn't he tell you? He said that he had written a note to you, but he wasn't sure of you getting it, so he called on his way down this morning. It's tiresome, his being away for Christmas, but he said that Colonel Wright, at Headquarters, sent for him and that therefore he must go. I suppose you never have any chance to do as you like, any of you!"

Bracksley looked at her; in fact, he had done nothing else but look at her, Elizabeth realised, since he had come into the room. She was not exactly embarrassed, since his regard was not of the type which would embarrass a woman; yet puzzled, she spoke in a different tone.

"Captain Bracksley, you have had a pretty trying time and I am keeping you standing here. Do come into Bill's room and change. I'm afraid his things won't be very comfortable for you—you're bigger than he is, aren't you? But you must get into dry clothes and I'll tell M'wembo to get you a sundowner. I was waiting dinner for you, but as a matter of fact it is not quite time. I had given up hoping that you would come all these miles in this storm."

She was leading the way across the room towards her brother's bedroom as she spoke, and opening the door, led him in, and he followed her, swaying a little as he walked as if greatly exhausted and giving one quick glance around the room, even as he had glanced at her hand.

"So this is Bill's room, is it?" he said.
"Lucky devil. It's very nice. How long have you been out here, Miss—Miss..."

He hesitated, then she laughed.

"Oh, my name is Dunscombe, too," she said, "Elizabeth Dunscombe. I'm not married. I thought Bill would have told you. I have come out here for a year to be with him. It's rather lovely, you know. Bill and I were always such friends as children, and now he has got this job it was such a chance for me to come. They made rather a fuss at home. They thought West Africa wasn't healthy, but Bill told them this part of the country was safe, and if I would only act sensibly and take plenty of quinine I would be quite all right."

Bracksley nodded.

"You like it?" he said. "That's good. Well, I think Bill's very lucky. Miss Dunscombe, I wonder whether I might have some sort of a bath. I'm pretty dirty. I've had a bad journey and"—he paused, then went on quickly—"we all got caught in the storm and I left my men behind—my boys, you know. It was too bad to bring them on. I just came on alone this last five or six miles. I'm certainly dirty and torn, and as you see"—he put up his hand to his face and made a little amused grimace—"I do want a shave, don't I?"

"I'll send M'wembo to you," she said. "He'll look after you and get you a hot bath and show you where all Bill's things are. We'll have dinner in half an hour. That will give you time. You'll have a sundowner?"

Just for a second he hesitated, then he shook his head.

"No, thanks, I'd rather wait dinner. Thank you very much. I'll be glad to see M'wembo and shave and get respectable."

He smiled at her, and she saw what a delightful smile he had and what very good white even teeth. Elizabeth always noticed teeth in a man—or woman either for that matter. Then, as she closed the door and went away in search of the head boy, inside the room she had left the man sat down in the nearest cane chair and dropped his head in his hands. The room was going round

with him, and for the moment rest was all he needed.

When M'wembo came into the room, however, a few minutes later, he was pulling off his wet clothes, and during the next half-hour transforming himself from a worn, ragged, exhausted man into a clean, if rough, copy of a civilised individual. So that when, just before eight o'clock, he went into the sitting-room and found Elizabeth looking very attractive in a black frock with a large red flower on her shoulder, he looked, in Bill's white evening clothes, just like the rest of the men she had met out here, with the exception, so she said in her own mind, of being very much nicer and much better looking.

She smiled at him, and beckoned him over to the chair by the hearth where a wood fire was blazing, for after such storms as they had had, M'wembo knew well enough how cold the evenings got, and his own b'wana liked a wood fire at nights when it rained.

She found Bracksley a very pleasant, if a rather odd, companion at dinner. didn't seem to know very much about Bill's work, but he told her an extraordinarily interesting number of things about the country and about the people farther inland. He seemed very interested in all her news of England and in everything she chose to tell him about her own and Bill's affairs, but if it came to the actual work of the district or any discussion that touched on the Commissioner, Colonel Wright, or indeed any of the surroundings that she had begun to know since her arrival in Africa, he seemed rather at a loss or uninterested, which she did not know. It was evident that his work kept him well away from Bill's part of the world. She asked him once some questions about his long friendship, but he gave her an evasive answer and passed it off, which she thought a little odd. Then, remembering how curious men were about their affection for one another, she put it down just to his lack of desire to discuss intimate things, but she enjoyed his company very much, and when they moved over to the fire, M'wembo had cleared away dinner, and the coffee-tray was between them, she suddenly realised how very delightful life in Africa was, even on this much vilified west coast.

"It was indeed luck for me, when Bill had to go away just for Christmas, that you were able to come up," she said. "Bill told me he was going to ask you and that he sent a note, but I very much doubted when

that storm came up whether you would get here before to-morrow. You see, your district is some way off, isn't it?"

"It's not so very far," he said carelessly. "How many miles, I wonder? Oh, it's difficult to estimate."

"Bill said it was very nearly fifty from the Fort and very bad roads—that means twenty from here, doesn't it? It's a long way, and bad going."

"You are getting thoroughly used to the country," he said, smiling a little and thinking how attractive she looked. "Do you mean to stay out here with Bill long?"

"Yes. If I can stand it. I have not had a touch of fever yet, so there is no reason why I should, and I have been here three months. It's funny we have never met before, and I have heard Bill talk a great deal about you."

"Oh, we are all busy down here. Often one doesn't see another fellow one knows for five or six months. It was, as you say, just good luck that I happened to be able to get off just now. If I had been later, there certainly would not have been any chance to come up from my place. The streams are all flooded, and I should have had to wait until daylight."

"Then I am very glad you got through," she said. "I wasn't in the least nervous of staying alone, but after all, to-morrow is Christmas Eve and I should have been so afraid you wouldn't come for Christmas, though of course I didn't let Bill know I hated being alone for Christmas. It was just an uncomfortable feeling. One is sentimental—I know I am. I love Christmas. I should hate to live out here altogether because there is no snow, no skating, no—well, nothing of the things one always associates with Christmas. You see, I'm a terribly old-fashioned girl, even if I am post-war."

He smiled again, his blue keen eyes study-

ing her.

"You don't look old-fashioned, if that is any consolation," he said. "I think it is amazing how all you Englishwomen manage to look so fit and well groomed and smart even in this country."

She stared at him at the expression.

"You Englishwomen!" she echoed. "How do you mean? That sounds as if you weren't English."

"I'm Canadian. Didn't you know that?"

"No. I'd no idea of it. Bill never

mentioned you as being Canadian. What part? Do tell me. I was in Canada once."

"Nova Scotia," he said. "I was born and brought up there, but I have knocked about the world pretty well all over the place. Then I came out to Africa."

"Do you like it?"

"Oh, well enough. Yes, I suppose I like it, but I shall be glad to get back to civilisation. I have had enough roaming. I should like London now for a year. I would give my soul to hear the traffic in Piccadilly, and seeing the taxis all going up to the hotels for dinner, and people going in and dancing, and orchestra and lights, instead of this——" He waved his hand suddenly to indicate the dripping forest around them. "One gets fed up with nature after a bit, and the wild places of the earth. I have had too much of it."

Something in his tone made her look at him more gravely. He was no longer looking at her, but into the fire, and his face was set and hard and she noticed a ravaged look about him that before she had not realised was there—a look as if he had been through too much for a man of his years (he was about six-and-thirty, she guessed), and now that he had spoken she conceived that life had not treated him too well. After a moment she spoke meditatively.

"I expect one can have too much of it," she said. "To me it is all strange and new and therefore it is interesting, but to have my life out in these places, no! Certainly not in Africa. India? I don't know India, but I love Egypt. You have got civilisation behind you, there. You have a race Aryan in origin, but this place, I can quite understand, would get on your nerves if you had

too much of it."

He nodded, without looking up.

"It's got on mine," he said. "I have had just about as much as I can stand," and then, as if regretting that he had said so much, he laughed.

"Of course, that doesn't mean I am giving up," he added. "That would be absurd. If Bill can stick it, so can I—or, so could

I if I got the chance."

"If you got the chance!" she echoed. "I don't understand. You have. Your dis-

trict touches Bill's, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I was only just talking at random," he said, a little uneasily. "Nothing to it, you know. Don't take any notice. I am apt to ramble on in my talk. It's so seldom I get anyone to talk to."

"I suppose it is rather a lonely life,"

Elizabeth said. "Are you going to stay out here a long time. Are you going to make your future out here, or shall you go back to Canada?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"There are several things to decide first," he said in rather a peculiar tone. "I am not sure what I shall do. Yes, I think it very likely I shall stop out here."

"You would rather?"

"Oh, I don't know about that, no. London first, and then Canada I thought I would like, but with the chance to be in England whenever I wanted to, but I never want to see Africa again. I would give my soul to get out of it."

"Well, there's no reason why you shouldn't, is there? You could resign your job. You have given a good part of your life to all this and there is nothing to keep you here? It is different with Bill. He is younger than you, you see, and he is settling here to make his career, and end up as Commissioner or Administrator, or whatever you do end up as." She laughed a little at her own incoherence. "But with you it seems to be different."

His sombre gaze left the fire and met hers. "I am not a free agent," he said slowly. "I'm not like Bill. There are certain things that stand in the way of my giving up the job here and going home. You'll know them soon."

"Shall I? I suppose they are not very pleasant things, by your tone. I'm sorry. Is there a way out for you?"

He shook his head.

"No, I don't think so; except one way, and that is not particularly pleasant, though it is the way I'll have to take if I want to get away from this country at all. Somehow Africa gets you, but I really don't know why I should be talking in this peculiar fashion when I am supposed to be keeping you company for Christmas. It is rather odd that we should have just bumped into one another like this."

She smiled at his sudden change of tone, but the little uneasiness in her mind remained. For the rest of the evening he was gay, charming, altogether a delightful companion, but she could not get out of her memory that expression in his eyes and face when he sat looking at the fire, or quite forget his tone. When she was alone in her room that night she realised she liked him very much, quite exceptionally much, and she wished that she had met him before, and wondered why Bill had never brought him

up—he had talked enough about him. He had never given her any idea what this friend of his was like, but men never could describe each other. So annoying of them! They seldom could say even if a man were clean-shaven or had a moustache, and as for the colour of his eyes—well, it was ridiculous even to expect anything of that sort from them. So she slept peacefully, but woke in the morning, much to her disgust, with just the glimmering of a headache, on Christmas Eve, and with such an altogether delightful companion for Christmas! Funny! What would the family say if they could see her spending Christmas twenty-five miles from anywhere with an entirely strange young man, and a peculiarly attractive young man too? There was no denying that he was altogether very charming and certainly goodlooking. Well, it would do the family good if ever they did hear of it. Shake them up a bit! In her respect for authority Elizabeth was entirely post-war.

She drank her morning tea and was annoyed with herself that the headache seemed no better, but as she got up and bathed and dressed, finding it was no worse, went on to the verandah, where she found coffee and breakfast waiting and the morning quite clear after the storm, though still

extremely hot.

On the verandah at its farther end, looking across the little parade ground to the track that wound into the forest, stood her guest, and at her "Good morning" he turned round sharply, almost as if he had not expected anyone to speak to him. Nerves, Elizabeth decided, brought on by too long residence in this country. It certainly was an appalling climate. She realised it this morning because she did not feel too well herself. Heavy and with little shooting pains in her limbs here and there, and a distinctly tiresome and annoying headache.

However, she decided that it was no good taking any notice of that, and going across

to him she held out her hand.

"Good morning, Captain Bracksley," she said. "Did you sleep all right, or did that tiresome storm disturb you? It rumbled

around all night."

"Oh, I slept all right, thanks," he said.
"Storms don't worry me. I'm too used to them. But I'm sorry—I don't know whether I shall be able to stay through Christmas after all. I have had a message this morning from one of my men."

The world went blank for Elizabeth and she stood for a moment staring at him.

"You've had a message this morning?" she said. "I didn't know. I didn't know anyone had come. Is he here now? Have the men looked after him?"

"Oh, yes; everything is all right. He just came and gave the message; then went

off again. He knows my ways."

How queerly forced his voice sounded, and

he did not seem anxious to meet her eyes. "I'm terribly sorry, Miss Dunscombe. It's most rotten luck; but you know what it is with Bill. One can't always pick and choose. He thought I should be all right, of course, and here I am, sent for. What can we do? You have got friends near here, I suppose, somewhere?"

"Oh, yes," she said rather dully. "I have got people I know twenty miles away—the Northways. I wouldn't call them friends exactly. They are acquaintances. I suppose I could go to them for Christmas, but as a matter of fact I'll be quite all right here. M'wembo will look after me. He is entirely trustworthy. You're sure you have to go?"

He nodded.

"Yes, I'm pretty sure. I needn't go just yet, but I am afraid I will have to. I'm

terribly sorry."

"Oh, you can't help it," she said, trying to pull herself together. Queer how the news had made her headache worse. "I quite understand work is work, and when we come out—we women, I mean—if we are not going to be in the way, we have just got to understand that, and not hinder our menfolk, only I was rather disappointed. I"—she looked up at him and smiled very charmingly—"you see, I enjoyed your society last night. We make rather good friends, I think—don't you?"

He stood looking down at her, his face more ravaged and worn than had seemed last

night.

"Yes," he said very gently. "We make very good friends, I think, Elizabeth."

She smiled at his deliberate use of her Christian name.

"That sounds as if you thought so," she said, "in less than twenty-four hours, Captain Bracksley. I don't know your name you see."

"My name? Oh, my name's Larry," he said. "Not much of a name, that. At least, that's what I'm always called by my friends."

"I rather like it, Larry," she said. "It suits you. But anyhow, let's have breakfast. You must have breakfast before you

start. You can't go without proper food. Are you sure your man isn't anywhere about?"

"I'm quite sure he isn't, but I feel pretty sure that he was looked after. I sent him off post-haste at once to say I am coming. Thanks very much. I'd love to breakfast."

He followed her to the table and fell to with the hungry appetite of a healthy man, but suddenly he realised that she was not eating. She had only drunk a little of her coffee, and putting down his knife and fork, he spoke.

"What's wrong?" he said. "You're not

eating. Don't you feel fit?"

Elizabeth made a little gesture of im-

patience.

"Oh, it's nothing. Just a headache. Stupid, only I don't think I could eat any food."

"You had better take some quinine," he "That sounds like a touch of fever. No, don't eat. Just go indoors out of the heat. I'll just sit quietly for a bit, and if you haven't got any quinine I'll go and get you some. Where does your brother keep it ? "

"Oh, I have some on my dressing-table. Would you mind?"

He got up at once, went indoors, and entered her little bedroom, and on the threshold he stood for a minute looking round; plain, bare, like bedrooms in such parts of the world must be, yet with some of her things lying about, dainty, feminine things, and he stood just for a moment looking about him, and over his face came a scowl and then an expression of despair.

Going over to the dressing-table, he took up the little bottle of quinine that lay there, and picked up a snapshot, framed, that stood beside it . . . Bill, no doubt; nicelooking chap, and the girl. Very good of her; taken on a tennis-court in some English garden; soft breeze, soft white frock, tumbled hair, laughing face. Yes; she was very attractive. There was something more to her than there was to all the ordinary young girls he had met; not that he had met many of them lately. These last four years had been very far from English girls or their surroundings.

Like all big men, he was a quiet walker, and she did not hear him come back on to the verandah, but he saw her before she did, saw that she was lying back in her chair, looking distinctly ill, and going over to her, he picked up her wrist and held it. She opened her eyes then and started up.

"It's nothing," she said. "I'll be better; I have headaches sometimes. Everybody does. Don't look so worried."

But his fingers were telling a tale he did not like, and he stood looking down at her,

frowning.

"Oh, you shall have the quinine all right," he said. "You will want it. But I am sorry to say you have a sharp touch of fever. Quite harmless, you know, only very upsetting. You had better go straight to bed and I'll look after things here."

"But I can't," she said. "I can't go to bed; at least I won't. As you've got to go, I'll be quite all right. I'll sit quietly indoors until you go, but I'm horribly sorry to be such a bad hostess. Come in and talk to me, will you? You'll have plenty of

outdoors when travelling later on.

He insisted on her taking his arm indoors, and she was really not sorry, for when she got to her feet she realised that she was walking unsteadily and her head felt very giddy and queer. If she had been at home she would have said "Influenza" and gone to bed at once; but out here she hated the thought of spending the rest of the day alone in her room and all to-morrow, and she was miserably depressed that their brief acquaintance was to be so quickly over.

"It's awfully good of you," she said. "I'm being a frightful nuisance. There are cigarettes there. Won't you smoke?"

He took one, but did not offer one to her, by which she realised that he seemed to know quite a lot about the fever, whatever it might be. Malaria, of course. She had imagined herself quite immune from such an annoying thing. She had been out here for months, and, as she had said the night before, been perfectly well. However, the quinine would soon put her right, and so thinking she lay back in her chair and smiled across at him.

"I wish I could stay," he said, watching her, and speaking with a suddenness that "When is your brother was almost abrupt. coming back?'

"Why, the day after Boxing Day," she said in some surprise. "Didn't he tell you? He told me he had said so in the note, or a day after that."

"Oh, I suppose he did. I am very careless at reading notes. Stupid; yes, of course, but you spoke about Mrs. Northway. Wouldn't she just come over and look after you for a bit—just for a day or two?"

"I wouldn't ask her if I were dying,"

Elizabeth said as forcibly as she could, because the pain in her head and the fire in her veins began to make it difficult to talk. I can't bear her. I think she's a horrible woman and I am sure she would be furious if I dragged her over here at Christmas-time. Anyway, they are twenty miles off, and more. Please, Larry, don't look so worried. I'm perfectly all right. I am very strong. I'm never ill. I'll take masses of quinine and I'll go to bed directly you have gone. Won't that do?"

"I suppose it will have to," he said, "but you know this fever is not to be trifled with in this climate. Bill won't forgive you or me if he finds you are really seedy when he comes back. Will you promise me you'll go straight to bed? Is there anyone round here—any of the native women who would

come and look after you?"

"Well, I suppose they might, if they thought it was anything they wouldn't catch," Elizabeth said with a little smile; "but I think I'd rather not. I don't know them very well, and they've all got babies and they all have men to cook for, and they all seem to have their own things to do. Funny, isn't it?"

He made no reply, but sat there and presently Elizabeth found herself slipping into a heavy feverish doze, and it was with quite an effort that she roused herself to try to entertain him for these last remaining hours.

"You never told me last night," she said, speaking with a certain amount of care, because already words began to be difficult. "Are you married or engaged?"

He shook his head.

"No, neither," he said. "Marriage isn't for anyone like me. I'm a poor wanderer, you know, and no woman would stay out here with a fellow. No decent fellow would ask her to. And, marriage apart—well, I've not much use for it. Have you?"

"No, none. If I loved a man I would want to be with him. I should not want to spend six months or ten months of every year at home and just see him either when he came on leave or when I was able to go out," and then she smiled, rather ruefully, and passed her hand across her forehead. "It's awfully stupid of me to go and get this fever just now. I was so sure I should be immune from all this kind of thing because I didn't think about it, or worry. I thought, in fact, last night, I'd be quite an ideal wife for anybody out here."

He leaned over and patted her hand.

"You would make an ideal wife for any

lucky devil," he said, and his smile and light tone took off any banality from the words. "But we're none of us immune. It's fate. It gets you. It's just when you think you're safe that it gets you like that "—he turned his thumb down—" just gets you and says, 'Oh no, you don't, my fine fellow. You'll just do what I think and not what you think,' and we have to."

"I suppose so. Are your people in

Canada or England?"

"I've no people left except my father, and he, like me, is a born wanderer. I think he is in Japan at the present moment. He has plenty of money, so he is able to indulge his passion for wandering over the world. I saw him, about three years ago, in Malta.

I was there on my way out here."

"Have you only been out three years? I thought Bill said . . ." She stopped suddenly, because the pain in her head was so violent that she could not continue. After all, what did it matter what Bill said. She realised suddenly and unmistakably that all she wanted, all she must have, was to lie flat, to put that splitting head of hers on a cool pillow, not to talk, even though she wanted so desperately to talk to this man, wanted his company, wanted to make the most of the few last hours. But she realised now that she could not. Pain had got her, pain and a dreadful dizziness. She sat up, making a vague gesture with her hands, saw him spring from his chair and come quickly to her, felt him take hold of her wrists, and then knew nothing more at all.

"So that's that! Well, my son, you're in for it all right!"

The speaker stepped back from the bed where five minutes before he had laid his young hostess and stared round the room. The touch of her skin had told him the temperature was high, but somewhere there must be a clinical thermometer and he preferred to be accurate. She was lying there flushed, yet unconscious, with the stupor of high fever, and he had no compunction in hunting through the place for a thermometer. He found one at last and used it, then reading the figures, whistled softly—no ordinary chill this but sharp malaria or something worse. And to-day he must go—he was mad to have stayed so long since at any moment that other man might turn up.

Going to the verandah, he shouted and M'wembo came at once and answered volubly since this white man was speaking in his own tongue and with much skill, but the conver-

sation brought further complications rather than help. M'wembo's wife was to bear her first child, and, contrary to custom, was not so robust as she should have been—no other native woman knew anything of nursing or could be trusted with the b'wana's wife . . . M'wembo was deeply concerned and stood by vainly trying to think of a plan whereby he might be of service, but Bracksley dismissed him after a moment and turned back into the house. This English girl was very ill—he knew enough of the native of this district not to dare to leave nursing to such intelligence—he could not go away and leave her—yet to stay—

Walking up and down, he came to a halt near the door leading to her bedroom which he had left ajar and picked up a portrait already showing the ravages of the damp heat; a portrait of a middle-aged man with prematurely grey hair and cleancut features, a man whose serene mouth and wise, kind eyes made his face remarkable above the clerical bands and cassock. And staring, he held it in his hands, unable to believe

that had given him food, a change into decent clothing and a night's rest in a bed. The last few weeks of forced marches, of night travel when the moon gave sufficient light, of skulking and dodging, of depending upon friendly natives yet never daring to show



"'So that's that! Well, my son, you're in for it all right!"

his eyes, reading the writing underneath:
"To my darling child Elizabeth from her father."

James Dunscombe, Christmas 1925.

So that was who she was! No wonder she had accepted him so cordially, given him so frank a welcome; his daughter could do no less to one who was in distress and need.

Christmas Eve and every hour precious, almost every minute if he were to effect his escape and make use of the astounding luck himself to a white man, had been hell. He had a chance to get out of it—his road to the coast was clear, and once at the coast he could get aboard some tramp steamer and reach Europe. The man had deserved killing—not for one moment had he regretted it, but even in this lonely part of Africa one white man must not deliberately kill another just because he thinks that other unfit to live. . . . The puzzle was, where was

Bracksley . . . what had hindered him arriving?

A moan from behind the half-closed door checked his thoughts; going swiftly into the room, he found Elizabeth sitting up in bed, flushed, wide-eyed, her hands to her head, and as he entered she moaned again and gazed at him unknowingly.

"It hurts so! Daddy, can't you tell them to stop hammering? It's just here—and here—so silly to hammer—Daddy—

where are you——"

Larry Carfax went over to the bed, laid her down and held her still with firm gentleness.

"They will stop if you lie still," he said.

"Lie still—quite still—close your eyes——"

She obeyed him, relaxing against his strength.

"Don't go—you're not my father—but don't go——"

Her voice trailed off into a murmur and

he said very low:

"I won't leave you," and sat there watching her, knowing he had burned his boats. He was throwing away his last chance of escape, but this girl had been kind to him and in her necessity he could not leave her. Fate must take its chance. . . .

Somewhere in the middle of Christmas Day, the strangest Carfax had ever spent despite his wild and wandering life, a messenger appeared from the south with a note that as Captain Dunscombe would be delayed several days in his return, Elizabeth was to go over to the Northways and remain there, as Bracksley would have to go on to his own district on Boxing Day. He fed the messenger, sent back a scrawled message, hoping Dunscombe did not know Bracksley's handwriting, and returned to his self-imposed task. For three days he nursed Elizabeth with unremitting care and gentleness, and on the fourth, somewhere about midday, she opened her eyes and looked up at him, and he saw that the fever had gone.

"You have been down with fever. It's over now and everything is all right," he said, speaking quietly and distinctly. "Please drink this and try to go to sleep."

She smiled very faintly, obeyed him, and, too weak to question, slept for hours while Carfax sat just inside the living-room where he could see if she moved, and wondered how she would take the knowledge of the last four days when it should come to her mind. He must get M'wembo's wife now, ill or well; now that Elizabeth was conscious, he could no longer do what he had been doing—he

supposed she'd hate him, but that would not matter since by the time she knew the truth he would be in the hands of the law—wanted for murder . . . yes, it would matter. It would matter terribly. That first evening when they had talked far into the night and the morning after, before she was actually taken ill, had meant a lot to him; those hours had taken hold of his heart and the days that had followed, when but for him she might have died, had once and for all bound him to her.

It was absurd, pitifully absurd, but it was true. He, Larry Carfax, big-game hunter, explorer of some note, wanted now for the murder of a fellow-countryman up in the Highlands back of Lagos—and Elizabeth Dunscombe, sister of one of the very men whose business it was to hound him down, and daughter of the chaplain who in the Flanders trenches had for ever been by the side of the wounded and dying. Life was queer—

Carfax got up, listened to some sound he had not heard before, tiptoed across to the bed and, stooping, lightly kissed the tumbled fair hair, then squaring his shoulders, he went out of the house, down the verandah steps and across the hard-baked earth, which now showed no sign of the great storm, to the road.

Dunscombe jerked the car to a standstill at sight of him, jumped out, and turned on his Houssa sergeant, but Carfax spoke quickly.

"It's me. But I'm not bolting. I have something to say to you, and when I'm through I am at your disposal."

Dunscombe shot a glance at the house behind him.

"My sister---"

"Is all right if you don't make too much noise."

"What have you done?" Dunscombe's voice was hoarse. "Where's Bracksley? M'wembo!"

Carfax gripped his arm.

"Be quiet! Your sister is sleeping and she has had fever. Bracksley, who I take it is a friend of yours, has never turned up. Will you listen or will you not?"

"Never turned—my God—you—yes, I'll

listen."

Carfax led the way back to the verandah at the farther end to Elizabeth's room, and Dunscombe, his face flushed, his fingers nervously clenched, followed him and, controlling himself as best he could, waited.

Carfax did not delay, for he had no wish

to prolong these last few minutes, and besides, Elizabeth might wake.

"I'll tell you my side," he said, and faced Dunscombe steadily. "I've been up-country watching my chance to get to the coast.

of my fellas up yonder told me you'd been summoned to the Fort. I knew then it was all up if I couldn't get through before you'd started back, and I took a chance on the house. The storm helped—gave an excuse for my clothes and general condition.



here and the Highlands, and they—those of 'em I got near to—helped me with food. But I realised I'd got to get away pretty soon, as the net was closing in, so last week I made a line for the coast. I'd reckoned on night travelling while the moon held, and I'd have been through with any luck, when one

Pretty bad, I can tell you "—a faint amused smile twisted his mouth—" I didn't expect to see your sister and was pretty taken aback. She took me for someone she was expecting. Fella named Bracksley. I thanked my stars and fell in with the idea——"

"You utter cad——" Dunscombe made an instinctive movement forward, but Carfax did not stir.

"She fed me, gave me some of your clothes—not a bad fit, are they, by the way?

" I did."
" You ? "

"Yes. She couldn't be left to the native men, could she? She's asleep now. Been sleeping naturally since midday. I was just

"But Carfax spoke quickly. 'It's me. But I'm not bolting. I have something to say to you, and when I'm through I am at making up my mind that Mrs. M'wembo would have to come along anyway, when you blew in. Well—what are you waiting for? I'm here and I've no gun."

His voice had a rasping note in the last two sentences; reaching out, he took a cigarette from a box and lit it with jerky movements, and Dunscombe. staring at him, spoke slowly.

"You mean she's been too ill to know to know anything?"

"Much too

"You've looked after her?"

"I've not left her except for a minute or two since Christmas Day."

"And she's

"She'll be perfectly all right, if you go slow, in a few days. She hasn't known who I was, of course, for quite a bit, but this morning she's had some soup and she knew me—Bracksley, as she believed, you understand."

"But . . . but . . . ." Dunscombe was stammering a little. "You knew I'd come back. You knew I must get you."

When I'd shaved and had a bath and some dinner I almost thought I was Bracksley myself—the lucky fella! I meant to get away the next morning, but things turned out differently. Your sister fell ill. I sent for M'wembo's wife, but she was ill herself. There didn't seem to be anybody else, so I—well, I stayed on."

your disposal.'

"Then-who nursed my sister?"

"Oh, that!" Carfax shrugged his shoulders. "Wasn't time to think about that. Didn't make any odds any way when she was so ill. To-day—well, I might have bolted, and then again I might not. What about some food? You've probably had a pretty tough trip."

"I'd like to see her," Dunscombe said heavily, and Carfax instantly was on the

alert.

"Go carefully, and if you wake her I'll kill you."

The other stopped, although he had taken two steps along the verandah, and stared at his companion.

"That reminds me," he said slowly. "Why did you kill Burgess? For I suppose

vou did."

"Oh yes, I killed him right enough. And I'd do it again. He was the kind of vermin that there's nothing else for. A woman, wife of my head boy. That's all. And, by the way, just tell your sergeant to stand by with his rifle. It'll keep your mind at ease while you see your sister."

"My sergeant? Mind at-oh, go to the

devil!"

Dunscombe's voice was suddenly savage and without another look he tiptoed into Elizabeth's room, to come out of the livingroom a few moments later rather pale and suspiciously bright-eyed.

"She's still asleep," he said a little huskily. "And M'wembo tells me you pulled her through. That she'd have died——" He broke off, went across to the

other and held out his hand.

"If you say he deserved killing I'll wager he did!" he said roughly. "Get indoors while I change and tell me what you want me to do."

Carfax met his eyes, paused, then gripped the outstretched hand and wrung it. There was no mistaking his feelings though his words were irrelevant.

"She'll want a good deal of watching," he said, "and she won't want to see me again when she knows I had to nurse her. You'd better tell her M'wembo's wife——"

"I'll tell her the truth!" Dunscombe said with some vigour. "And if she's what I know her to be, she'll feel what I'm feeling. Don't be a fool."

When Elizabeth came fully to herself next day it was to find her brother beside her and to feel weak but entirely sensible once more, and Dunscombe, who had already sent up-country to get the needed evidence of Burgess's conduct and written a long and

detailed letter to headquarters, said no word of Carfax and was a little surprised to find Elizabeth made no inquiries. But twentyfour hours later she broke the ice abruptly by asking where he was and if the servants had looked after him.

"Also, Bill," she said, "I'd like to know what's wrong with him, because the morning of the day you came back, I was dozing but I was sensible—before he knew the fever had really gone, and I remember opening my eyes and seeing him sitting on the floor by the foot of the bed watching me. And there were tears on his face. I was too muddled and weak to do more than just wonder why and then doze off. But this morning I remembered."

Dunscombe hesitated, looked at her, hesitated again, then made up his mind.

"Look here, Elizabeth, I've something to tell you—it'll be a bit of a shock, but you've got to put up with it. Now listen!"

Carfax, cleaning his pipe out on the farther side of the little clearing, looked up to find Dunscombe at his side.

"Hullo! Time to send me down to the Fort?" he jested, but Dunscombe shook his head

"I've reported direct to the Governor and asked to be allowed to go down with you. He's a man in a thousand and he'll size up the case as it should be sized up. But that's not what I wanted. I've just been with Elizabeth. She'd like to see you."

Carfax jumped to his feet and the colour

went out of his face.

"You've told her?"

"All the lot. Go in and see her."

" She----"

"She wants to see you. For Heaven's sake, man, pull yourself together and go in. You've a girl to face, not a firing-party!"

Carfax put down the pipe, pushed open the gate that led to the garden patch and walked towards the house, and as the little rough gate banged behind him he wondered stupidly if it would hurt much to hear that it had for ever shut him out from heaven . . . then he was on the verandah . . . at Elizabeth's door, in her room, and Elizabeth, still in bed but sitting up, held out her hands to him

"Larry!" she said, and though she looked at him, her tone was meditative as though she spoke to herself. "Larry. I like the name. It suits you. Come here, Larry. I want to ask you something."

Stupidly, feeling as though some giant

hand was about his throat, Carfax obeyed and she made an imperious gesture.

"Closer. Kneel down, here, by me, so I can see you. Give me your hands."

She took the hands he held dumbly out, pulled him down and pressed her fresh sweet mouth to his. For one instant, his brain reeling, he thought he was in a dream, then he caught her in his arms and held her and

kissed her over and over till she drew back, breathless and smiling.

"There, Larry!" she said. "That is what I wanted you for. That and one other thing. Why did you cry that day before Bill came back? Was it because you thought I should hate you—that you'd never see me again? Was it? Was it? No—you needn't answer after all. I know."

## WIFE O' THE WIND.

MAY, I never had a lover nor a man,
The men think queer o' me
An I'm glad that so it be,
For the lass who loves the wind don't need a man,

The other maids they laugh at me and scorn; But I let them have their say An I take no heed o' they For the wife o' all the wind's above their scorn.

Why, I stand upon the edge of you high cliff, Leaning far out on the gale High above the storm-birds' wail, While the breakers leap to snatch me off the cliff.

There's summer nights he'll woo me soft and warm, An I pass throughout my door To a bed upon the moor Where his whispers close me round an keep me warm.

An there's days he comes for me with shout an call, An I run upon the leas Just to see him in the trees, An I answer shout for shout, an call for call.

Oh, I've heard him in a fearsome passion rage, When he'll whip across the land Till I scarce can make a stand, But my heart it leaps and glories in his rage!

There's times he loves to tease an make a jest, An he'll set a-loose my hair Till it's blowin' here an there, An he'll hide, an pounce, an catch in merry jest.

Aye, I love him, for he's big an grand an free;
An he blows away what's mean
An he makes me true an clean,
Till my love it's like his heart, as big an free.

LÆTITIA WITHALL.

# "MR. ALI"

# By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

#### 

T.

T is not generally known, I fancy, that big emeralds are rarely flawless. And their value, unlike the diamond, does not necessarily increase with their size. They are accredited in the East as possessing talismanic and medicinal properties. For this reason they are much sought after by Indian princes and potentates. The best stones come from Muzo in Columbia and Canjargum in India. Like all other precious stones, they are subject to the Medean decrees of Fashion. Of late years they have been successfully imitated by the manufacturers of paste, but I need hardly add that the application of a file would expose the sham gem at once.

The head of our firm, Mr. Rappington, was very proud of our collection of unset emeralds, and, so far as I know, it was the finest collection in London. Almost invariably we sold the big stones to Indian princes or their representatives. One of our best customers was the late Abdul Khan. The experience I am about to relate happened long ago, but the details are fresh

in my memory.

An Indian gentleman wearing a frock-coat and turban, who spoke English perfectly, walked into our establishment and asked to see Mr. Rappington, who happened to be in Paris. I introduced myself as Mr. Rappington's partner and asked if I could be of any service to him. He hesitated and smiled.

"You don't know me, Mr. Corwen. Mr. Rappington does. He sold me some three years ago a few emeralds which I bought for Abdul Khan."

A few emeralds——!

In this casual fashion he spoke of a transaction which involved many thousands of pounds. He went on, indifferently:

"I had better wait till Mr. Rappington

returns."

I was slightly piqued, because within the year I had soared from being head clerk to a junior partnership.

"You are Mr. Ali?"

"I am known by that name to my English friends"

He spoke with grave dignity. From his manner I surmised that in his own country he bore a name, and possibly a title, which he disdained to use in England.

"Mr. Rappington," said I, "will not be back for at least a week. In his absence,

perhaps---"

He cut me short with a gesture not too flattering.

"As you please. If you care to show me any unset stones——"

"With the greatest pleasure."

He followed me into an inner room, sat down, and offered me a cigar, asking permission to smoke himself.

"That is an after-dinner cigar," he remarked carelessly. "Perhaps you would

prefer to smoke it later on."

I put the cigar aside and thanked him. He had the air of a grand seigneur, if you know what I mean. He looked slightly bored. But a sparkle came into his dark eyes when I displayed our finest emeralds. He took a lens from his pocket and examined each carefully.

"There are one or two I might want here, Mr. Corwen, if we can agree about the price. Perhaps," he smiled ironically, "you are easier to deal with than your partner."

I replied with what dignity I could muster that Mr. Rappington had set a price upon the larger stones, and that Mr. Ali must know as well as I did that the head of our firm never haggled.

"Ah, yes; it was a case of take them or leave them last time, but—if I took all of

them?"

All of them—!

I hope I am not a grasping man, but the mere possibility of Mr. Ali taking all of them thrilled me. To meet Rappington on his return from Paris, to tell him that I—I whom he looked upon as a successful salesman of trinkets—had sold in his absence all his emeralds thrilled me to the marrow. . . . Meanwhile Mr. Ali went on examining the

gems as if they were peridots or garnets.

"You have good eyesight?" he asked.

" Yes."

"Emeralds, as of course you are aware, are good for the eyes."

"Mr. Rappington thinks so."

"And they drive away evil spirits, Mr. Corwen."

He laughed, sat back in his chair, and looked at me humorously.

"Our midwives esteem them highly."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; I could tell you some curious stories, but you wouldn't believe them. The emerald has virtues which might surprise you. However, I am not here to talk about that. I am staying at the Splendid."

I bowed. The Splendid, at that time, was the smartest and most expensive hotel

in London.

"I should like to examine these stones, in your presence of course, under a better light than you have here; I should like to weigh them on my own scales. I have a little lamp that might interest you and a polariscope. To me these are merely crystals. I look at them as an expert. Are you aware that this small stone is not genuine?"

"What?" I gasped.

"If you exposed it to a high temperature it would lose its colour."

I was astounded and said so. I have not the expertise of Rappington, and, oddly enough, he was jealous about his emeralds, and always had been ever since I knew him. The stone looked to my less experienced eyes a genuine emerald. Mr. Ali laughed, not ironically this time.

"It is not a corundum, Mr. Corwen, of the green variety: it is a crystal coloured by a process unknown to me. Put it aside; show it to Mr. Rappington when he returns. What hour to-morrow morning before luncheon would suit your convenience?"

I hesitated. I had taken valuable jewels to Buckingham Palace and elsewhere, but this tray of emeralds was the apple of my partner's eye. Possibly Mr. Ali read my thoughts, for he said quietly:

"I have taken my rooms for a month. I can wait a week. The matter is of no

urgency."

"It is to me, Mr. Ali."

"Possibly. I am the agent of Abdul Khan. He, not I, has a passion for emeralds, a madness. They represent to me a chemical formula."

He stood up, an impressive figure, superbly Oriental.

"I will wait on you, Mr. Ali, at eleventhirty."

"Perfectly."

I showed him out, passing through our principal sales-room. As the door closed behind him, I turned to one of our clerks, who had been with us for many years.

"Did you recognise that gentleman?"
The fool snickered, attempting an inopportune joke filched from a music-hall song.

"All the coons look alike to me, sir."

"Coons-! That is Mr. Ali."

"I thought it was."

"He is a Hindu of high caste, the trusted agent of His Highness Abdul Khan."

" Pardon!"

I went back to the inner room and put away the emeralds. Then I tested the stone which was affirmed to be paste. I put it away, and rang up the Splendid. Yes; Mr. Ali, so the clerk informed me, was a guest in the hotel. He had taken a sittingroom, a bedroom and a bathroom upon the first floor.

That was not quite good enough for me. I sent a long telegram to Rappington asking what discount he would allow upon a large cash transaction, and adding that I should like his consent to my taking the emeralds to the Splendid to show to Mr. Ali. You will say that I was unduly apprehensive of possible trouble. Well, we have to be careful. No stranger enters our establishment without being watched. have, I add this reluctantly, to keep an eye on certain customers. Rappington replied to my telegram within a couple of hours, authorising me to show the emeralds to Ali, and saying that he would take ten per cent off on a spot-cash transaction. I dined at home, and smoked my fine cigar afterwards. It was superlative; and in a modest way I am a connoisseur of good tobacco.

#### 11.

AT eleven-thirty, I was ushered into Mr. Ali's sitting-room, too gorgeously furnished for my taste, which, so the wife tells me, is Victorian. Mr. Ali invited me to sit down and excused himself for a minute or two. I had time to look about me. There was a Louis XV table near the window with a small petrological microscope on it, fitted with a mechanical stage for measuring angles. Rappington owned one, but I had never used it. I placed upon the table the small

leather case that held our emeralds. Ali came out of his bedroom.

"I should like you to look at this stone," he said pleasantly, "and tell me what you make of it. I won't keep you waiting much longer."

He laid upon a sheet of white blottingpaper a large oblong green stone, and went back to his bedroom, closing the door.

I have no hesitation in saying that the stone he had entrusted to me appeared to be an emerald of the finest quality and

"My opinion is not worth having, Mr.

"Mr. Corwen——! You are too modest."
"So my wife says. I hope I am honest. You are an expert; I am not. For more than twenty years I have concerned myself with the setting of stones bought by Mr. Rappington; and he never buys without consulting an expert."

"If I offered you that stone for a hundred

guineas you wouldn't snap it up?"



"'There are one or two I might want here, Mr. Corwen, if we can agree about the price. Perhaps,' he smiled ironically, 'you are easier to deal with than your partner.'

colour. My mouth watered at sight of it. Upon a small jade tray near the microscope I noticed several unset gems, including some opals and tourmalines. It was disconcerting to look at them, because it occurred to me that Mr. Ali might ask for my opinion about them, and I am not a lapidary. Some of the biggest men in Bond Street are, like myself, craftsmen, concerned with the setting and selling of precious stones, employing experts to buy them at the current wholesale price. It would be rather humiliating to have to admit this to Mr. Ali.

He came back and sat down beside me. " Well——?"

"Have you brought the counterfeit I detected vesterday?"

"I haven't; I put it aside."

"I will bet you five pounds that Mr. Rappington never showed it to an expert. We all slip up sometimes. You can take it from me that counterfeits are being manufactured to-day that might deceive the elect. But they can't deceive the instrument I have on this table. That is why I asked you to bring your emeralds here. If it would amuse you, I will teach you what to look for in a genuine emerald, and how to tell the difference, let us say, between a stone from Salzburg and one from Siberia. There

are modifications in the edges of the prismatic crystals which belong, as you know,

to the hexagonal system."

I did know this—and nothing more. I may as well own up here and now that Mr. Ali found me plastic to his hand. Also, it occurred to me that he might teach me something Rappington didn't know. The head of our firm commands my highest respect, but I have suffered now and again from his knowledge too sharply contrasted with my

"Please show me the difference, Mr. Ali." "We will examine your finest emerald."

I unlocked the case and took from it a magnificent stone. Mr. Ali fetched from another table what looked like a camera hidden by a black velvet cloth. For a minute at least, he fiddled about with the microscope and its accessories. He placed my stone in a tiny pair of pincers attached to the mechanical stage.

"We will try the light from the window

first, Mr. Corwen."

Apparently, he was not satisfied with this, for he lit a lamp, and drew the heavy curtains. I watched with interest his deft fingers manipulating the microscope, the tube of which was horizontal. Presently, he put his head under the black velvet cloth. He withdrew it, smiling.

"Perfect."

"What am I to look for?"

I am ashamed to say that I cannot repeat what he said. It was too technical. According to him I should be able to read certain angles, but I was to note even more carefully the colour of the emerald under polarised light.

I put my head under the black velvet

cloth.

I saw nothing but a red circle with dazzlingly white edges. I am reasonably certain there was nothing else to see; but I strained my eyesight in the futile endeavour to see more. Instead I saw less. It flashed into my mind that too strong a light had blinded me. Under the spell of this disconcerting conviction, a voice, from an immeasurable distance, seemed to float to my buzzing ears.

Good-bye, Mr. Corwen."

#### III.

When I recovered my senses I was lying upon the carpet, and I must have lain there, semi-conscious, for some time. I remember staggering to my feet and falling headlong upon a sofa, still giddy from the effect of some drug whose effects, fortunately, passed off, leaving me reasonably clear-headed.

The emeralds had disappeared with Mr. I was locked into his sitting-room. However, he had left me my watch; and I glanced at it. More than an hour had passed.

What should I do? I was still bedazed

and almost light-headed.

I rang the bell.

A servant unlocked the door with a key which had to be supplied by a chambermaid. By that time I had wit enough to tell the man to summon the manager and to hold his tongue. The manager, whom I didn't know, was with me in two minutes. When he grasped the essential facts he was terribly upset and not too sympathetic. Acting under his advice, we sent for Charles Impey, who had retired from Scotland Yard, and was considered at that time one of the ablest private criminal investigators in the kingdom.

Impey, whose appearance disappointed me, was not too sympathetic either. But he went to work promptly enough, whilst I watched him flitting about like a London sparrow in search of food, darting from the sitting-room into the bedroom and then into the bathroom. Hardly a twitter escaped Afterwards, he told me that he asked no questions because so obviously I was not in a condition to answer them. The manager brought me up a stiff whisky-and-soda and a dry biscuit. He said a few words:

"Impey knows what to do, and we can trust him to do it. If any man can find a needle in a haystack he can."

Impey was too busy to talk to him. Finally, he perched upon a chair near mine, regarding me with twinkling alert eyes.

"What do you know about Mr. Ali?" I told him of our former transaction.

"You are sure that this man is Ali?"

"I'm not sure of anything."

"M'm. I'm quite sure that this fellow is Mr. Alias. He knows Abdul Khan and Ali. This is a high-class job—carefully planned and boldly executed. Our man has been taking his meals in the restaurant, doing himself well. That conveys nothing to you, but it disposes of the suggestion that he is a high-caste Hindu. He had sausages for breakfast this morning. After doping you, he had a bath, smoked two cigarettes, put some hair on his face, trimmed it, burnt the hair clipped off, walked downstairs without using the lift, and at this moment is probably having lunch in a quiet hotel within a mile of us."

"Sherlock Holmes——!" I ejaculated.

"I don't compete with that great man.
And I would rather not regard you as Dr.
Watson. We are not dealing with a pro."
"What?"

"Let us try to see him as a brilliant amateur actor. He knows India; he is a horseman; he has served as an officer; he found out that Rappington is in Paris; he is almost at the end of his resources. pro would have covered his tracks better. He would have seen to it that not a single drop of brownish-coloured water was left in the bathroom; he would not have left one tell-tale hair on his dressing-table; he would not have burnt superfluous hair in the fireplace; he would not have left behind clothes which would tell an intelligent boy that he belonged to the upper classes. He had to travel light, of course, and he had to get out of this hotel without attracting notice. He did that. So I assume that he walked out of this room, looking what he is—an English gentleman. You had better return to Bond Street, Mr. Corwen. The leather case that held your emeralds is in the

"When shall I see you again?"

bedroom."

"I may ring you up or call upon you before closing time."

I retrieved my leather case, and went my way.

#### IV.

I REACHED our establishment to find a telegram from Paris.

"Don't take emeralds to Splendid. Am crossing to-day. Shall be with you at 4.30. RAPPINGTON."

That telegram might have been delivered before eleven. There had been delay in transmission. I went to my private room and sat down. I managed to transact some perfunctory business, thanking my stars that I had wired to my partner on the previous evening. Had he smelt a rat in Paris? Conjecture was futile. I sat near my telephone, hoping against hope that I might have a call from Impey. His manner with me was non-committal, but he had found needles in haystacks and might do so again.

An English gentleman——!

My thoughts, between exasperating interruptions, dwelt on that. Rappington arrived at a quarter to five. I must say that he took our appalling loss like a sportsman, but, at the time, I didn't know what he did. As soon as he had the facts, he remarked quietly:

"Mr. Ali crossed with me. He has gone to the Splendid and will be here in a few

minutes."

" Mr. Ali ?"

"Yes. The real Mr. Ali stopped in Paris on his way to London. I happened to drop into a shop in the Rue de la Paix after I sent my first telegram to you. I was shown some emeralds. Naturally enough I mentioned Ali. My dear Corwen, I nearly dropped dead when I heard that Ali was in I decided too hastily that my informant was mistaken. And it was possible that Ali had left Paris. Anyway, I ran him to ground at the Grand Hotel. Then I wasted some precious minutes, but it was very late and I made sure that a telegram would reach you before eleven if sent off the next morning. Ali thinks he knows who has been impersonating him. He has gone to the Splendid to make sure. Ali is commissioned by Abdul Khan to buy more emeralds from me. And one man only was aware of this."

Our head clerk came in.

"Mr. Ali is here, sir. Not the Mr. Ali who called yesterday."

"Show him in."

Ali walked in, impassive as all Orientals are. He bowed politely to me and in a sentence spared me the necessity of telling a disagreeable story twice.

"I have seen the manager of the Splendid.

I am very sorry for you, gentlemen."

He was less tall and stouter than our brilliant amateur actor, but there was a resemblance—the same hawk-like nose, firm lips, and proud carriage of the head. He continued imperturbably:

"We have to find a man who is famous throughout Northern Asia as a hunter of big game. He is perfectly fearless, and I would sooner face a wounded tiger than him. It goes without saying that a hunter knows all the tricks of the hunted."

Rappington and I glanced at each other;

we are both men of peace.

"You know who he is, Mr. Ali?" I asked.

"There is only one man who could impersonate me and steal your confidence, Mr. Corwen, as easily as he stole the emeralds."

"May I ask his name?"

Ali looked at Rappington, who nodded.

"Lord Ernest Ribble."

I gasped with incredulity. I had never met Lord Ernest, but his father, the Marquess of Edenvale, happened to be one of our honoured customers.

Rappington enlightened me a little.

"Lord Ernest is a bad egg, Corwen. Mr. Ali tells me he was warned off the Turf at Calcutta for malpractice. A charge of cheating at cards at Simla was not quite proven. He is, unquestionably, at the end of his financial tether, and not on speaking terms with his father."

I wiped my forehead, and I was still wiping it, stupefied into silence, when Impey joined us. He said at once:

"I have found out the name of our

gentleman."

"My congratulations," said Rappington.

"How did you do it?"

"I told Mr. Corwen that he was an amateur. He left behind him a dinner-jacket. He had removed the ordinary tailor's tag, but it had four buttons on each sleeve, and was cut in at the waist. I took that jacket to Savile Row, to the man who is famous for this particular make of jacket. To such an artist each jacket carries with it proofs of identification as unmistakable as thumb-marks. And, by the way, I have an impression of my Mr. Ali's thumb-mark."

"Have you found him?" asked Rap-

pington.

"No difficulty about that. He is bold as the devil. He walked into his club, where he has a bedroom, and where he keeps a wardrobe full of clothes. He is dining there to-night."

"You mean to say that you could arrest

him now."

"I have not a warrant for his arrest. You must apply for that, gentlemen, if you wish the law to come to the rescue."

"And if I don't?"

Rappington rapped out the question almost aggressively. He went on without

consulting me or Impey.

"That jacket was identified as the property of Lord Ernest Ribble? Yes. His father, who has my deepest sympathy, is a public-spirited statesman and a great gentleman. For his sake, if I could get back the emeralds, I might, I say I might, let the matter go no further."

"And that, sir," replied Impey, "is why I came straight here instead of going to the Yard. Lord Ernest believes that he left the Splendid, which he did, unnoticed. He took with him nothing but the emeralds

and his own gems. He had all he wanted at his club. He could stroll into one of the parks and remove a small moustache and side-whiskers. Everything belonging to him was unmarked. But I found clues that stamped him as an amateur in crime. For example, an old pair of Jodpore riding trousers, probably made in India, and a broken leather curb strap which he may have used as a watch-chain. His razor was a Service razor, such as officers buy from their batman."

"But what are we going to do?" I asked

impatiently.

"I want my emeralds," growled Rappington.

"I have come many thousand miles to

see them," added Mr. Ali.

"In a case of this sort," said Impey, "the Yard is only too glad to stand aside. There is safety in numbers. If you gentlemen will come with me, I will take you to Lord Ernest. What he will do when he meets us is beyond conjecture."

Rappington jumped up.

"Are you coming with us, Corwen?"

" Yes."

"And you, Mr. Ali?"

"If you please; it may be amusing." He actually smiled at me, as if I were in the habit of following wounded tigers into their lairs without a thought of the consequences.

I was shaking like an aspen leaf when I left our establishment.

#### V.

WE walked to the club. Impey didn't surprise me when he told me that it was not a famous club. Gentlemen who are warned off the Turf cease to be members of exclusive institutions. This particular club was of the free-and-easy, cut-and-come again variety, something of a boarding-house, so I gathered, for Ishmaelites. Anyway, that did not concern us, but all clubs, as Impey pointed out, are sanctuaries. No stranger, unless properly accredited, can pass the hall porter. If Lord Ernest was informed by a servant that Messrs. Rappington and Corwen wished to see him, he would see to it that they were disappointed. He would find, so Impey said, a bolt-hole. We had discussed this before leaving our premises; and Mr. Ali had made a happy suggestion. Lord Ernest had a friend, also a mighty hunter, a certain Major Carson. It was humanly certain that Lord Ernest would see Major Carson if that gentleman expressed

a wish to see him. Impey, gallant fellow, offered to present himself as the Major. When he made the further suggestion that we should remain in the vestibule until summoned I raised no objections. I was quite willing to remain there indefinitely if Impey desired it. Both Ali and he were of the opinion that such a man as Lord Ernest would not attempt to bolt in the presence of the hall porter and other members of the club who might be hanging about the

a pair of glass swing-doors and approached the hall porter. After a word or two, a



"'You have, of course, a warrant for my arrest. Serve it. I decline to answer any questions. I reserve my defence."

entrance. His wits, not his leg muscles, would be challenged.

The club was near at hand in one of those snug streets leading out of St. James's Square. We reached the front door without misadventure and passed into the vestibule. The brave Impey pushed through

boy in livery ran nimbly up a flight of broad stairs. Impey, apparently, said another word to the hall porter, and joined us, saying to me with a derisive smile:

"You can come inside. The hall porter

raises no objections."

Nor did we, although I confess that I

cursed the hall porter under my breath. We found ourselves in a lounge, embellished by trophies of the chase. I was disagreeably startled to find confronting me what I took to be a man-eating tiger with his hideous maw wide open. I stepped back hastily, till I realised that the beast was stuffed and in a glass case. The incident shook my nerves. At a gesture from Impey we three sat down upon a couch upholstered in zebra skin. Impey stood between the stairs and the swing-door.

Our subterfuge "drew" Lord Ernest.

As he came down the stairs, he could not see us, for, like the Spanish Fleet in Sheridan's play, we were not in sight. It was obvious,

"You are looking for Major Carson. He is not here."

"Really? Who are you?"

It was my "Mr. Ali"; and it was difficult to identify him as such till he spoke. Lord Ernest's face was not bronzed by Indian suns as I had expected. He looked pale and haggard, as well he might; but his dark eyes and hair, when I faced him a minute later, were unmistakable.

"My name is not known to you, my lord. But you know the names of Mr. Ali, the representative of Abdul Khan, of Mr. Rappington and of Mr. Corwen. They are here, sitting just behind you, and they wish to see you for a few minutes upon



"Rappington was staggered; I could see that."

as he paused with his back to us, that he was looking for the Major.

Impey addressed him.

a matter of urgent private importance."

He emphasised the adjective--private.

Lord Ernest never winced. He turned

coolly and nodded as we stood up. He had the audacity (or pluck) to smile at us.

"Ah! Ali—and Mr. Rappington. I don't

think I have met Mr. Corlen."

Possibly he was playing to the gallery; I don't know. He went on suavely:

"We shall not be disturbed in the Stran-

gers' Room."

We followed him down a passage and into a rather uncomfortable room, furnished with half a dozen chairs, a writing-desk, and three or four occasional tables. There was a smell of stale tobacco smoke that I found oppressive.

"Sit down, gentlemen. Can I offer you refreshment? No." He glanced quizzically at me. "A cigar, Mr. Corlen?"

"Corwen, my lord. I thank you-no."

What cool impudence—!

But his assurance, confounding to a man of business—and I lay no claim to be anything else—ceased suddenly to distress me. Impey, my tower of strength, was not in the room. At the critical moment this coward—I refuse to mince my words—had deserted us. Everything in that evil-smelling room became indistinct, but I heard Rappington's voice addressing me:

"As a matter of form, Mr. Corwen, are you prepared to refresh Lord Ernest's memory? I understand that you met him this morning in the Splendid Hotel? Did

you, or did you not?"

When the head of our firm speaks to me in this autocratic fashion, I forget that I am his partner; I become, so to speak, his head clerk again. I replied temperately:

"I met his lordship this morning at the Splendid Hotel. I am positive on that point. His last words to me were: 'Goodbye, Mr. Corwen.'"

Lord Ernest laughed—and apologised.

"There is some absurd mistake. Mr. Ali, whom I know well, can testify that I was in Northern Asia less than six weeks ago. I arrived in London this morning. I came here, where I am well known; and I have been here resting—ever since."

What effrontery—!

"You were in India five weeks ago," said Mr. Ali. "And you told me that we might meet in London; we have. You knew the nature of the business that brought me here."

"Did I? Let me see. Oh, yes—emeralds. Poor Abdul Khan's craze. What on earth has that to do with me?"

"Everything—or nothing," answered Rappington sharply.

"I suggest to you, Mr. Rappington, that the correct answer is nothing."

A silence followed. I, for one, was hopelessly befogged. Rappington, as he admitted afterwards, was irritated. He spoke first.

"I have to bring a grave charge against you. If you are innocent, it will be easy for you to establish your innocence. You say you arrived this morning. Where were you last night?"

"It would be more in order, Mr. Rappington, to tell me first with what I am charged."

"Certainly. My partner, Mr. Corwen, charges you with administering some drug to him and then making off with a parcel of emeralds which he brought with him to show you. He charges you with impersonating Mr. Ali. He believed that he was doing business with the trusted representative of His Highness Abdul Khan."

"Does he? Your Mr. Corwen has a lively imagination. If he charges me with all this, you have, of course, a warrant for my arrest. Serve it. I decline to answer any questions. I reserve my defence."

Rappington was staggered; I could see

that. Mr. Ali observed suavely:

"Liberty is dear to you, Lord Ernest?"
"Tchah!"

"You talked to me of an expedition to Tibet."

"I did."

"In the interests of His Highness Abdul Khan, I think I could promise you substantial assistance if—if you still wish to go to Tibet. But this little matter of the emeralds must be—how shall I say?—yes—settled first. Come, come, give back the emeralds to Mr. Corwen, who is thinking, as you are, of his dinner."

I was thinking of nothing of the sort. It had occurred to me that the emeralds might be upon Lord Ernest's person, but he was wearing a well-cut blue serge suit which fitted him admirably and closely. He might have been poured into it, as the expression goes. Lord Ernest laughed. He held up his hands, lean capable hands with prehensile fingers.

"Search me, if you like, Ali. I carry nothing but a silk handkerchief, a thin

cigarette-case and my petty cash."

He spoke to Mr. Ali in the pleasantest voice, disdainfully ignoring Rappington and myself. I have to admit that his voice seemed to hypnotise me. His self-confidence robbed me of my own. I had a painful vision of myself stammering and confused under the cross-examination of clever coun-

sel. I made certain at the moment that a hunter did know all the arts and crafts of the hunted. He would establish an alibi; he had hidden the emeralds; his personality, his patrician insolence, would serve him well with a British jury. . . .

And Rappington, so he told me afterwards,

was thinking just as I thought.

Impey joined us. One glance at his face was enough for me. He looked flushed, dis-

concerted, sullenly unhappy.

"Gentlemen," he said abruptly. "I have blundered. I assume all responsibility. I apologise to you and to Lord Ernest We must look elsewhere for the emeralds. They are not in his lordship's possession."

I expected another contemptuous laugh

from Lord Ernest.

"You dog," he said savagely. "You have searched my room, taken an unpardonable liberty without authority."

I had a glimpse, no more, of the tiger. Impey attempted no denial; he looked sheepish and almost abject, as he stammered out:

"I b-beg p-pardon."

"I should like to thrash you, but you're too small a dog, and I should dirty my fingers." He turned to us, less aggressively: "Have you anything more to say, gentlemen?"

Rappington said testily:

"If Mr. Impey is absolutely certain that a grave mistake has been made, I—I have nothing to say, nothing."

"Your name is Impey?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I shall not forget it."

He strode out of the room.

Rappington glanced at me, not too kindly. He made certain that I had blundered as egregiously as Impey. And, mind you, I knew that I hadn't. But, I repeat, I was bewildered. I could hear Rappington's voice speaking to Impey:

"You must explain your blunder elsewhere. We may be bundled out of this club by a grinning servant before we know where

we are."

"And where are we?" murmured Mr.

"I will explain in your room, sir."

WE returned to our premises very crestfallen. It was past closing time, but we went in by a side door. Impey made his explanation:

"After my visit to Savile Row, I walked to Lord Ernest's club. I am known to the hall porter. I know all these fellows, who are very useful sometimes, and well remunerated for service rendered. From him I learned that his lordship had strolled into the club at twelve-thirty, had taken several letters awaiting his arrival, had lunched quietly by himself, smoked a cigar, ordered dinner and then gone to his bedroom. When I hurried to you I left one of my men to shadow Lord Ernest if he left the club. He didn't leave it. As he came slowly downstairs in that tightly-fitting suit, I decided that the parcel of emeralds was not on his person; and, as obviously, he was not carrying a pistol. It was safe therefore to leave you alone with him, for you were three to one. I found out where his room is, a small room, easily searched by any man who knows his business. I was sure that my search would be successful, because I had timed accurately my man's movements. He intended to take the emeralds to Persia, where he could dispose of them."

"Why Persia?" asked Rappington indis-

creetly.

Impey smiled at him as he had smiled at me when I exclaimed "Sherlock Holmes."

"Persia is not under British rule, sir. But I found on the dressing-table a pile of Persian coins. And I noted a stout suitcase half packed."

I interrupted.

"I have not blundered. Lord Ernest drugged me and robbed me."

"Has anybody questioned that, Mr.

Corwen?"

I glanced at Rappington triumphantly. His eyes declined to meet mine. Impey continued his narrative:

"I repeat what I said to Lord Ernest. The emeralds are not in his possession."

"Then where the devil are they?" de-

manded my partner.

"In mine. Where else could they be? You wanted, quite properly, to burke a public scandal that would have discredited a great family to which England owes at least—consideration. I still maintain that his lordship is a brilliant amateur. He guessed instantly that I had found the stones, but he lost his temper. This cardboard box was at the bottom of the soiled-linen basket."

He handed the box unconcernedly to Rappington. Strictly speaking, he should have handed it to me, who had engaged him,

but I was so overjoyed that I forgave him. Rappington opened the box.

"Gracious, man, these are not my

emeralds; they are duds."

"So I thought," said Impey, "but I was not sure. Lord Ernest will not trouble you to return them."

Rappington scowled at him; so did I.

A joke out of season is unpalatable.

"I gave Lord Ernest credit for being a man of resource. There was the bare possibility that his room might be searched; so he laid a trap into which I nearly fell. I continued my search. I found a malacca cane. I unscrewed the top of it, held it upside down, and these stones trickled on to my lord's counterpane."

He put his hand into his right trousers' pocket and fished out our emeralds. He

handed them this time to me.

"You had better count them, Mr. Corwen, to make sure that they are all here. The hall porter, an observant man, mentioned to me that Lord Ernest walked into the club carrying a malacca cane—and nothing else."

You may be sure I counted them carefully. "There is an extra stone," I said to Rappington. Then I remembered the counterfeit which I had put aside. Lord Ernest, amongst his many accomplishments, must have been a bit of a conjuror. He had exchanged, without my noticing it, a genuine stone for a dud, but he had thoughtfully added the genuine stone to the loot he took from me.

We made a very satisfactory deal, next day, with the real Mr. Ali. Lord Ernest went, I believe, to Tibet, and has not been heard of since.



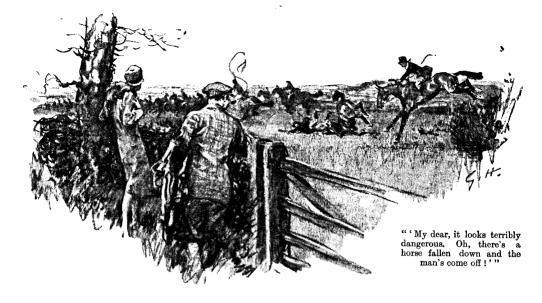
## HE WHO IS GLAD.

HE who is glad for every day's bright beauty:
For a flower or a red leaf in the wood,
Who sees fresh colour in each hour's drab duty—
I think he thanks his Maker as he should.

He who is brave to meet each strange new sorrow, Whose courage marches with him as he goes, Carries a stronger heart into to-morrow, And thanks his God the very best he knows.

He who walks calmly, surely, through disaster, Trusting an unseen hand to bring him peace, Lifts up his life—a prayer unto his Master, And offers him a praise that does not cease.

He who moves gently when the stress is pressing, Lending a hand, such as a woman would, Who turns his days and years into a blessing— I am sure he thanks his Maker as he should.



# DOGGIES

- By E. F. BENSON
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T had really been difficult to know what to do with this sumptuous access of fortune, and Amy Bondham, whose very eccentric uncle had left her a couple of hundred thousand pounds, almost wished that it had been less. She and her Christopher were childless, there was nobody whom either of them wished to make rich, and her imagination, usually so vivid, could not figure how to spend an additional eight thousand a year.

She and Christopher were dining alone on the night after the eccentric uncle's cremation. It had been an agitating day, for the deceased had left a very odd will which included the strange provision that on pain of forfeit of this substantial fortune, Amy, dressed in white, should directly after the cremation scatter his ashes in Piccadilly Circus with ceremonious gestures, and she had found it very trying. Christopher, however, had suggested that nothing in the will prevented her making her ceremonious gestures from the seclusion of a taxi, and then throwing all that was incombustible of her uncle out of the window, and she had done this in the presence of her uncle's solicitor, who sat beside her. The ashes

had blown in the face of the policeman at the crossing, and set him sneezing: it had been a nerve-racking performance. . . . But it was over now, and this evening she and her husband were wondering, with anxious faces, not how to make both ends meet, but rather how to make them not meet, and thus employ in a self-respecting manner this large sum of money. They had already all that they could conceivably need to oil the wheels of their passage through this vale of woe, and a means of rational expenditure yielding a high dividend of enjoyment and advantage was what they sought for. Amy's sole objective was social success, and Christopher racked his brains for suitable suggestions.

"You might like a bigger house, dear," he said. "There's a charming house in Berkeley Square of which the lease is for sale. I had a look at it this afternoon. Fine, big reception-rooms, a dining-room

where you could seat fifty——" Amy shook her head.

"No. I don't want that sort of house," she said. "Those great entertainments only help people who want to get on in a vulgar, blatant manner. Far more chic to

have our little house here and not collect

She sighed.

"I used to think how wonderful it would be to have huge dinner parties and great balls," she said, "but really that is out of date. A dozen people to dinner, as long as they are the right ones, is far more telling. The other's not my line. . . . Then I had thought of endowing some charitable institution, a hospital or something, but what should we get by doing that? You could be made a peer or at least a baronet, because whatever they may say, honours are purchasable, but that wouldn't make me a penny happier. It's far more distinguished to be Mrs. Bondham than to be Lady Bondham, especially if everybody knows

Christopher ruminated over this. secret heart he would have liked to be Sir Christopher (at least), but if it wouldn't give Amy any pleasure there was the end

An idea struck him: if Amy didn't want a bigger house in London, to which her amazing and hospitable activities had hitherto been completely confined, there were places outside London which gave scope for social expansion. August and September, which were slack times in town, were already adequately filled, for there was a month at Aix-les-Bains, and visits to country houses. But she had always found January and February rather unoccupied, and though she professed to be delighted to have a few quiet weeks to herself, he was sure she would sooner share them with other people.

"A yacht," he suggested brilliantly.
"Cruising in the Mediterranean: Mrs. Bondham with a few friends on board."

Amy looked at him in amazement.

"Darling, how can you be so silly?" she said. "As if you don't know that I'm

the worst sailor in the world."

"But I'm not so silly," said he. don't suggest you should cruise except where it's quite flat. There are harbours in the Mediterranean, I am told. You could go overland and join your yacht at Monte Carlo, and have no end of friends on board. Then you could take the train and join it again at Naples or Taormina."

She turned her head to him.

"You're not silly: I withdraw that," she said. "Go on: let me hear more."

Christopher gave her a very bright little sketch. The idea seemed most attractive to him personally, because he adored the sea, and hated the climate of London in winter: two or three months in the Mediterranean were much more enticing than two or three bronchial colds in Mayfair, and he figured himself in a peaked cap, a black coat with brass buttons, and lawn-tennis shoes. Naturally he did not lay stress on that, but indicated how Amy would come out overland to Monte Carlo, and there find her beautiful yacht lying in the harbour, how she would collect friends who would dine on board and dance on deck, and then rejoin it again, unless the sea was perfectly flat, at Naples. The illustrated papers would be full of her

His little picture kindled her imagination. but not, unfortunately, on his lines. Certainly he was right about getting out of London during those months, and there was something pleasantly sumptuous in his scheme. But there were objections, for supposing the Mediterranean should choose not to be flat, she would spend her winter in making land journeys up and down the coast in order to dine occasionally in a harbour. It hardly seemed worth while. And in the intervals was Christopher to be careering about at sea with entrancing guests on board? She quite trusted Christopher of course, but still-

"Well, that is an idea," she said, "and it's clever of you to think of it. It certainly has its points, oh, certainly, and we must bear it in mind. What we really want is to see delightful people and do delightful things instead of living under a blanket of fog in an empty town. But the Monte Carlo crowd . . . you know they are not really our sort. Nothing but gambling all night and dressing-up all day. I think you and I would feel starved there."

"But all the world goes there in the winter," said Christopher, who yearned

after his yachting-cap.

"Indeed it does not, for the majority of my greatest friends, the ones I really value, go down to their places in the country, and shoot or hunt. The Harrogates, the Middlesexes, the Pateleys, the Bidefords, they all spend those months in Leicestershire, and we see nothing of them all the winter."

She jumped up.

"Oh, Christopher, I think that is what we must do," she said. "A box-I notice that in Leicestershire they call houses boxes -I should really like to take a nice big box,

somewhere down there this winter, and see more of all those dears. It would be a new side of life: I often feel when I'm with hunting-people that there's a big piece of them of which I know nothing."

"But I should be expected to hunt," said Christopher in some dismay. "So

would you."

"Well, I don't see why you shouldn't hunt," said she. "Anyhow, you can see what it's like first, and then if you feel you can't manage it, you can easily get out of it. If there's a meeting of the hunt don't they call it a meeting?—anywhere close, you can have a cold or be obliged to go up to London. As for me, I shall certainly say that I don't hunt, but why should that cut me off from all my friends? Where's Country Life? I've often noticed that there are hunting-boxes advertised in We must look, and try to find a box somewhere near the Bidefords. We shouldn't want any shooting of course, for I know you would hate to be obliged to shoot, and I rather think that where there is hunting there isn't shooting. And there are Huntballs: I believe they have the greatest fun in Leicestershire. We will go into it all."

Luck always attended Amy, or perhaps it would be truer to say that her determination, when once she had set her mind on anything, had something of the compelling power of faith about it, and made to happen that which she wanted to happen. They set off to Aix a day or two afterwards, and the very first person Amy ran up against was Lady Bideford, who told her of precisely the house that seemed likely to suit her. It was in the middle of the Paston country (of which famous pack her husband was Master), and he would be delighted to know that somebody friendly to hunting would be occupying it, since the owner, who was going abroad for the winter, was a wretched curmudgeon without a spark of sportsmanship in him, and would never allow the covers in his park to be drawn.

"It's the one black spot in the county," she said. "The horrible man refuses to let us hunt there, and I believe the place is crawling with foxes. You'll be a public benefactor, and we'll put up your statue, and have a meet there as soon as ever you

get in."

Amy noticed the word "meet," which was evidently the correct version of "meeting," and got the address of the houseagent.

"I do hope I shall be able to get it,"

she said. "I shan't hunt myself, but it will be so delicious to be among friends when London is empty in those dull months. Christopher is looking forward to it so. And I'm so fond of dogs."

Lady Bideford naturally supposed that Amy had suddenly changed the subject when she said she was fond of dogs, for it never occurred to her that she could be alluding to hounds as dogs. They weren't

dogs: they were hounds.

Amy's application to the house-agent was successful, and though the rent asked for Cold Bovington House was rather high, as being in the centre of the best hunting-country, it did not make a very large hole in the newly bequeathed fortune. The house was big, but pleasant and cosy, and though the country round, of clayey soil, was extremely dreary, consisting, as it did, of flat grass fields intersected by ditches and thick bare hedges, the Harrogates and the Middlesexes and the Pateleys and the Bidefords were all within very easy distance, and Amy was soon asking them all to lunch to meet each other in her urban style. But this was rather a disappointment; she had supposed that people hunted in the afternoon just as they played golf and lawn-tennis in the afternoon, but it appeared that they hunted in the morning, and continued doing so as long as it was light, and so were practically never back to lunch even if it rained, for hunting went on in the rain exactly as if it was fine. She gathered, however, that if it froze hard, and there was bone in the ground (whatever that might mean), hunting stopped. So she hoped it would soon freeze.

Christopher had subscribed liberally to the Paston, and had received a card which gave him a list of its fixtures. This was rather embarrassing, for though the ostensible reason for the Bondhams having taken Cold Bovington was that he should get some hunting, one glance at a run which swept across those fields with their high hedges and deep ditches on the morning after they arrived was conclusive as far as his hunting went. Amy quite concurred.

"My dear, it looks terribly dangerous," she said. "Oh, there's a horse fallen down and the man's come off. How awful! I wonder if he's hurt. You must promise me not to attempt it: I had no idea it was

like that."

Christopher hastened to relieve her mind, but when the list of fixtures arrived, it was clear that a tangled web must be woven without delay. The Paston met with terrible frequency within easy range of Cold Bovington, and on the approach of these horrid mornings, Christopher had to arrange to be summoned up to London on business of high importance.

Amy did her part, when she motored off to see the meeting (which she almost always remembered now to call "meet")

be sure it was better than hunting, but that was all that could be said for it.

Sunday alone was a perfectly safe day for him at Cold Bovington because there was no hunting then, and Amy had an opportunity of getting the Harrogates and the Middlesexes and the Pateleys and the Bidefords over to lunch. Christopher could then lament those annoying summonses to London which had prevented him taking



and explained to the Duchess of Harrogate and Ladies Middlesex, Pateley and Bideford that her husband (so disappointed) had been obliged to go up to London. That was easy for Amy and productive of pleasant conversation, but meantime poor Christopher was spending four hours and more in the train, lunching at his club, passing the idle afternoon in naps or cinemas, and arriving back at Cold Bovington in the evening, bilious with his sedentary day. To

part in the wonderful runs they had been having.

On the second Sunday of their tenancy, there was a dinner to which they were bidden at Lady Bideford's. Christopher had been delighted to observe the very marked fall in temperature which had occurred during the afternoon: the wind had shifted to the north, and he had read with strong satisfaction in the Sunday paper that there had been a heavy fall of snow in Derbyshire,

and the general weather outlook was unpromising. Snow, in moderate quantities, so Amy told him, interrupted hunting as effectually as frost, and there really seemed a good hope that he would not be called up to London next day. But if there was any question about it, he would certainly have to go, for the meet next morning was at his own house. At the end of dinner Lord Bideford moved up next him with port and cigarettes, and expected great things.

Christopher fortified himself with a glass of port and the recollection of the very unfavourable weather forecast.

"No, I've had rotten bad luck," he said. "Every day that you've met since I've been down here, I've had to go to town on some annoying business. But I hope I shan't have any summons to-morrow, and get a day's hunting instead. No sport like it, is there? What time will you meet to-morrow?"



"'Oh, do wait one minute, Lord Bideford,' she cried."

"We've been stopping the earths," so Christopher understood him to say, "in the big cover that comes close up to your house, and we shall find there for a dead certainty. These last three years we've never been allowed to draw your covers, and we all much appreciate the fact that we've got a good sportsman there now. We'll have a rare day to-morrow if there's no snow. You'll be out with us, of course. You've not had a day with us yet, have vou?"

"Ten o'clock," said Lord Bideford. should like to have made it nine, but there are a lot of lazy folks. We'll meet right at your front door, and draw the big cover alongside straight away."

Christopher knew the morning trains by now: he would have to catch that melancholy 8.15 a.m., unless kindly snow or frost came to the rescue.

"Splendid!" he said, hearing the faint unmistakable patter of snow at the window. "I trust the weather will hold up. But it's bitterly cold: looks like frost or a big snowfall."

It was still cold when, after a rather expensive rubber or two at bridge, he and Amy went home. The sky unfortunately was clear now and the prospect of an effective fall of snow was remote. But, on the other hand, a clear sky might mean frost before morning, which, if reasonably severe, would do just as well, for the ground was already lightly frozen, and an adequate supply of "bone" might develop during the night, thus allowing him to have a quiet day in the country. He went to bed in hopeful mood, but woke in the small hours, to hear, to his dismay, the fatal sound of rain on his windows: you could never count on this wretched climate. Morning broke dark and windy and warm, and it was necessary to catch the 8.15. As his train crawled London-wards, the rain ceased and the sun came out, and he imagined to himself how delicious it must be in the Mediterranean, where no foxes had holes, and no packs of dogs would be hounding him from the deck of a commodious yacht.

By half-past nine the animated scene began at Cold Bovington. Lord Bideford arrived early in a scarlet coat which Amy now knew to be of the shade called pink, and presently the meet assembled. Amy kept popping in and out of the house, enjoying herself immensely, for Harrogates and Middlesexes and Pateleys with wives and sons and daughters and horses and motor-cars looked in, and she found everybody so friendly and full of cordiality at this admission to covers so long shut to them, that she felt that she was indeed the provider of this rich entertainment. And would she not think about buying Cold Bovington House? The old unsportsmanlike owner, Lady Middlesex believed, was quite ready to sell it, and Lady Pateley had heard that he was never likely to live in England again: lungs, my dear. Then the Duchess of Harrogate, who had not had any breakfast, came in and had a slice of cold ham and a cup of tea; in fact, there could not have been a more wonderful morning picnic of the best and brightest. The hounds were gathered outside, and the whips, whom Amy had learned not to call ostlers, were preventing them from invading flower-beds, and there they were in a compact, good-tempered mass, wagging their tails (Amy had not learned "sterns" yet), and nothing could have been more English and sporting and aristocratic. Then Lady Pateley hoped she would dine with them to-morrow night (and of course Christopher), to meet a Royal Highness who was staying with them for two days' hunting, and finally Lord Bideford said that he had given everybody ten minutes' law, and so he wasn't going to give them any more.

He went out to mount, and Amy and the picnic followed. Outside there was a perfect mob of horses and grooms and motor-cars and all those nice dogs whom the whips knew individually by name. five minutes they would all have moved off, when, at the very last moment of her triumph, Amy, suddenly remembering how, much she liked dogs, had the most illinspired and incredible idea. And yet, it seemed such a suitable dog-loving thing to do. . . . She ran back into the diningroom and, rummaging in a cupboard of the sideboard, found a tin of small sweet biscuits. With this in her hand she tripped out again.

"Oh, do wait one minute, Lord Bideford," she cried, "and let me give your dear doggies a biscuit each. What pets!"

For one moment it was as if the whole of the Paston hunt was turned to stone. The next it burst out into shrieks of inextinguishable laughter: whips and ostlers and riders all yelled. Twice Lord Bideford failed to command his voice before he could utter a word.

"So kind of you, Mrs. Bondham," he said, "but I am afraid the doggies are in training. We're very strict with them."

The hunt moved off: every now and then a peal of laughter broke out again, and presently Amy was left alone at the front-door with her unopened biscuit-tin. Her kindly thought for the doggies, she perceived, must have a comic side to it, and she had no idea what it was.

The story ran through the county like fire through dry stubble, leaving in its track not desolation but hilarious mirth. In a couple of days everybody knew it, and it must have reached the ears of Lord Bideford's distinguished guest before the dinner, for when Amy was presented to him and told him how the Paston had met at Cold Bovington House, he suddenly burst into giggles. Somehow she had become a comic: people didn't want to laugh, but they couldn't help it, and she could not but perceive that nobody mentioned hunting to her any more, while if she initiated the topic which so largely interested

them, they gave faint grins and firmly changed the subject. She began to perceive that she was getting no nearer the real life of hunting-people: she felt she was branded, like some kindly innocent Cain. The place suited Christopher no better, for the weather remained deplorably mild, and he had to go up to London about four times a week.

He had come back one evening after one of these objectless excursions, tired and dejected, for it really was a doggy's life. He had brought the evening paper down with him, and Amy, idly turning over the leaves, read a paragraph or two about the sparkling sunshine on the Riviera, and the enormous fun that no end of smart people were having there. She glanced through

that with a certain interest, for she knew a great many of those distinguished triflers, and then her eye fell on an advertisement beginning, "Sea-sickness a Thing of the Past. . . . This perfectly harmless and infallible remedy is vouched for by . . ."

She read it through, and laying the paper down, glanced at Christopher. He was sitting close by the fire, for he had a bad cold, and was stertorously dozing. In a moment her mind was made up.

"Wake up, dear," she said. "We must have a talk. How depressing this place is: why did we ever come here? I want the sun, and so do you. And this advertisement: look at all the testimonials! A bishop, a prize-fighter, an Earl. Let us think about yachts."



### THE END OF A DAY.

WE had tramped all day and at dusk as we sat on a stile
Our thoughts were like honeycomb fragrant from many a mile
Of downland, meadow and heath, and our hearts were still
As dewponds under the sky on a Sussex hill.

The west window opened. The clouds were a golden choir, The Weald a trough of light with a wall of fire, Like some cathedral nave at vesper close Suffused with sudden light through the mullioned rose.

For a while we scarce knew the green land that all day we had trod Nor the stream at our feet that flowed red from the heart of God, And we watched the solemn ebb of the eventide And the bent dark downs that mourned while the glory died.

We went as if from a church to a world without, A world enlarged, with eternity ringed about, And the stars that night were a shining pebbled beach Washed by an unknown sea at its ultimate reach.

We came to a little inn at the edge of our charts Under a steeple shadow; and full were our hearts As we went to our beds in the silence aware that at morn We should walk transfigured hills in a world new-born.

THOMAS SHARP.

5.250

# VANITYOF VANITIES

# By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Berry & Co.," "Jonah & Co.," "The Stolen March," "And Five Were Foolish," "Blind Corner," "Valerie French," etc.

#### ● ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL ●

HE only three living descendants of Richard Stone Ludlow were gathered about the great table which had been made to his order in the reign of William the Fourth. One sat there of right, for he had inherited the table as Richard Stone Ludlow's son; the others sat there because their host, their great-uncle, had asked them to dine and because, when he asked them to dine, they always went.

George Stone Ludlow was eighty-nine and a true pillar of the state. He was the son of his father, and everything that he touched derived from him that grey magic of stability which had sprung from his grandfather's loins. Solid, regular, imperturbable, nothing could shake the Ludlows or anything that was theirs. Merchants of the City of London, their name at the foot of a letter turned the paper to sheepskin, the ink to blood: residents of St. James's Square, they had come to leaven even that standard loaf: squires of a Dorsetshire parish, their word was law. The threefold tradition had passed from father to son and had stood immaculate for over a hundred years. Men used to say that the only things that the War had left as they were were the Pyramids of Giza and George Stone Ludlow and all his works.

The man was a figure-head, proverbial, commanded a reverence which was honoured behind his back: perhaps his greatest achievement was that he had gained and held the confidence of his great-nephew and -niece.

These were entirely modern. . . .

The cloth having been drawn, the butler approached Miss Edgecumb and offered her cigarettes.

The girl looked at her host.

"Is this allowed, sir?" she said. The old man smiled and nodded.

"To-night, yes. I trust you will stay at table and drink your coffee with us."

"I don't have to smoke, sir."

"I know that. I'd like you to."
Natalie Edgecumb did as she was bid.

Her cousin, Jonathan Baldric, sat back in his chair.

"Which reminds me," he said. "A week ago I sent you some cigarettes."

"What ever made you do that?" said

"I can't think," said Jonathan. "Did you get them?"

Natalie nodded.

"I rather liked them," she said.

Her great-uncle turned to Jonathan.

"I'm sure," he said, smiling, "that's all you wanted to know."

"I suppose so," said Jonathan. "But you must admit, sir, that her manners leave much to be desired."

The old man laughed.

"The true woman's always do. I see a night-club was raided on Monday last. I hope you weren't there."

"I cannot tell a lie, sir," said Natalie.

"I left ten minutes too soon."

"And I, sir," said Jonathan, "arrived ten minutes too late."

"Then all's well," said their great-uncle.

"But you mustn't run things too fine. Oh, by the way, I have to send to Paris to-morrow. Can my messenger do anything there for either of you?"

"He can bring me some scent, sir," said Natalie. "And six pairs of silk stockings,

if he can get them through."

Her cousin raised his eyes to heaven.

"I should like two cigars," he said meekly.

"Of course he must declare them to the
Customs and pay whatever they ask."

"That's right," said Natalie swiftly. "And all the time he can have the scent in

his hat."

"I think he'd better wear the stockings," said Jonathan. "If he doesn't run about, it won't do them any harm."

The old man laughed.

"I'll send him to see you," he said, "before he goes. Then, if he's willing to play, you can settle the shape of the game. But you mustn't shock him too much. He's been very well brought up, and I think he sings in a choir."

"The very man," said Natalie. "I

wonder if he'd bring me a dress."

Coffee was served.

"When do you go to Buckram, sir?" said Jonathan.

"The first week in May," said his greatuncle. "I hope you'll pay me a visit whenever you please."

"Thank you very much, sir. I—"

"I'm coming, sir," said Natalie, "as soon as you're settled in. May I bring a poet I know? We met in the sea at Biarritz, and he's written a sonnet about my bathing-dress."

"Something quite slight, I suppose," said

Jonathan.

"My dear," said her great-uncle, laughing, "I shall be most happy to have you, and, if you get on with the poet, why, so shall I. Was he a poet before he saw you in the sea?"

"I don't know," said Natalie. "I must ask him." She looked across at her cousin. "You weren't, were you?" she

said.

Jonathan wrinkled his nose.

"Mind he doesn't forget his banjo," he said contemptuously.

The door closed behind the servants, and

the three were alone.

For a little the light conversation held its own, the old man taking his share, but no more than that: with eighty years of memories to draw on, no single reminiscence passed his lips. George Stone Ludlow was an excellent host.

At length-

"Now I want to talk business," he said, "for ten minutes of time. When I leave this room, I get sleepy, as you very well know: and then, again, business should be talked about a table and not from an easy chair."

He paused there, and, after a moment's hesitation, took a cigarette from the box and lighted it thoughtfully. The act was significant: George Stone Ludlow had not been known to smoke for twenty years.

For a moment he inhaled luxuriously.

Then-

"It's like this," he said. "I'm eightynine years old—rising ninety. And, as men
don't live for ever, before many months I
shall go to my long home. Your greatgrandfather had three children, of which I
was one. Had he been asked to predict
how many descendants of his would be
living to-day, I dare say he would have said
'About thirty'. As we know, he would
have been wrong. He has only three.
Soon he will have only two.

"I know it's the fashion to mock at a man of substance, a man who behaves himself and honestly holds what he has. His regularity is sneered at: his belief in law and order is pitied: because he expects those who have passed their word to keep it, as he does himself, he is abused. But I think that, if you examine the circumstances of his traducers, you will always find that their quarrel with him is personal. Either they do not behave themselves or do not honestly hold that which they have. Frequently they have nothing. Or law and order are distasteful to them. Perhaps at some time or other they have not kept their word. . . . I don't think I'm wrong in this. I have found the personal reason over and over again. I have, therefore, no shame in being a man of substance: and, though I'm not proud of it, for I see in it no reason for pride, I believe that men and women of substance, high and low, are what this country needs. A decent, orderly home, inhabited and maintained according to the means of its owner, is a rock upon which a statesman can build and points a moral which agitators find it hard to refute. The bigger the home, of course, the more its influence: but a crofter's cottage can offer as sound foundation as any County seat.

"Very well. My father made two such homes, and he handed them on to me: it was his wish that I should inhabit and maintain them, as I have done: before very long, one of you will be the mistress of one, and the other master of the other. You will each have the means to keep them—indeed, you will have much more, for I'm very rich. Between you, you will share my fortune—upon condition that you use and maintain your homes. Should either of you

fail in that, his or her home and share will at once revert to the Crown.

"And now let's go to the library. I have a lot of new records, and I'd like you to see what they're worth."

than. "I'm devilish proud to be his kin."
"There's no one like him," said Natalie shakily.



As the car which bore them stole out of the famous square—

"He's a great old fellow," said Jona-

"Quite so," said Jonathan thoughtfully.
"No one. I—I wonder who's going to get which."

"Oh, you brute," said Natalie. "Hardly out of his house, full of his wine, sprawling about his car—and you begin to pick over—"

can't even wait till you're home to try on the crown."

"The correct answer to that," said her



"Easy over the cobbles," said her cousin. "Who's pickin' over what? And I'm

nothing like full of his wine. I wish I was."
"It's indecent," said Natalie. "You know it is. For no reason on earth, you're going to be left half a kingdom, and you

I think you probably do." Natalie choked. "Yes, I thought so. And now let's get this straight. For no reason on earth, you're going to be left half a kingdom. Are

you going to ask me to believe that you don't care which half it is?"

"I suppose you mean that you want St. James's Square."

Jonathan Baldric sighed.

"I don't," he said. "I mean that since

half-past nine you've never stopped prayin' that you get Buckram Place."

Natalie shrugged her white shoulders.

"I shall," she said shortly. "It's really hardly likely that he'll leave it to you."

"Why not?" said Jonathan.

"He knows you loathe it," said Natalie. "That its beauty, its peace, its traditions mean nothing to you.'

"Well, I'm banking on getting it," said Jonathan. "I'm going to roof in the terrace an'——"

"What?"

"My dear, you can do what you like

with St. James's Square."

"Of course he'll leave me Buckram," said Natalie. "Knowing how much I love it, it would almost amount to an insult to leave it to you."

"Oh, feel the brakes," said Jonathan. "Feel the brakes. An' who's tryin' on the crown now? An' climbin' up on her chaser, because she's not sure of its shape."

Natalie bit a red lip.

After a moment she put out a little hand. "I withdraw," she said softly. "I—I hope very much I'll get Buckram. I can't help that. But---"

"Tears for two," said Jonathan, putting her hand to his lips. "Cool hands you've got, haven't you? And very well shaped. I don't wonder he's doing you proud. Oh,

an' look at that leg."

"Be quiet," gurgled Natalie, sliding her arm through his. "He's doing us proud, because he likes us-both, and because we've never slimed round him, but just

shown him decent respect."

"That's his fault," said Jonathan. "And I like our dinners together. He's human: it's like hobnobbin' with a Van Dyck or drinkin' out of a flagon that Lamerie made. Besides, I like seeing you there. You know. Apart from the crowd. It's like-

"Now do be careful," said Natalie. "These similes."

Her cousin frowned.

"Respectability," he said, "is devastatingly dull. If it weren't, I should be respectable. But your presence leavens the lump. I've been wholly respectable to-night, but I haven't been dull."

"That," said Natalie, "is nothing to do with me. Any woman—"

"And then you're wrong," said Jonathan. "''Owdareyou' Bearskin's all right: but put her at George Stone's table and all her paint'd come off. She wouldn't fit, my lady: none of 'em would. But you're at vour best."

"Perhaps," said Natalie," the germ of respectability is in my blood. Naturally, then, I should thrive at St. James's Square. I'm not at all certain, Jonathan, that, when I do get Buckram, I shan't withdraw."

"'Withdraw'?" cried her cousin.

What from ? "

"Town, night-life, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world."

"Oh, you can't do that," said Jonathan. "At least, not yet. It's-it's not to be thought of. You're a very desirable maiden, and, as such, you mayn't be immured. I think there's a law against it. Besides, if

ever there was one, Buckram's a pomp.

And then again, you may get St. James's Square."

"Which is a vanity. Oh, Jonathan, I

do hope I shan't."

"So do I," said her cousin heartily. "St. James's Square would suit me down to the sub-soil—and a bit over. Buckram's all right to hunt from, but-

Natalie squeezed his arm.

"If," she said sweetly, "if by any chance—I don't think it's likely—but, if by any chance I did get St. James's Square, if the law will allow us, Jonathan, will you promise to swap?"

"My dear," said her cousin, "will I promise to back a winner whenever I can?"

"Whatever happens? I mean, he may live for years—I jolly well hope he does. And you may be married, and your wife may fancy sticking to Buckram Place."

"I promise. I know what I want. Besides, I shall simply tell her I loved you

first."

"Another wrecked home," sighed Natalie. "However, you've been very sweet."

The man looked round and down at the

eager face.

"There are times," he said, "when I can deny you nothing. This is one of them. I know you set out to beguile me, but I've allowed for that. You're amazingly attractive, you know: but ten times out of ten you've got the notice-boards out. You 'Visitors are warned not to touch '."

Natalie nodded.

"That's right. I'm a woman of substance. I hold what I have."

Jonathan sighed.

"At any rate," he said, "I'm your cousin. You can't alter that."

"I don't want to-to-night," said the girl.

"Because I've done as you asked?"

"Perhaps. I don't know." She turned a glowing face. "And I'm sorry about the boards, but that's my way."

"It is a pity," said the man. "I

"Here's the club," said Natalie swiftly, withdrawing her arm.

Jonathan shrugged his shoulders.

"After you, the deluge," he said. He sighed again. "Well, well... An' there's ''Owdareyou'."

Five minutes later he was dancing with Dorothy Bearskin.

\* \* \* \*

That Natalie loved her cousin there can be no doubt. Jonathan Baldric was a very attractive man. Lazy, good-tempered, fearless, he sloped through life, doing all that he did handsomely, taking all things as they came and changing the rough to smooth with his pleasant, infectious smile. Add that he was very good-looking, and you will see that the ball of feminine friendship was at his feet. He kicked it along skilfully, kept his head and his heart, stayed But, if he kicked skilfully, he unspoiled. kicked the delicate ball, and that was the sum of the trouble with Natalie Edgecumb. She knew that he liked her, suspected that he loved her—and continually pushed him away. She could not bring herself to give an opening to the man to whom openings were being given by everyone else. others made themselves cheap: determined not to do this, she made herself too dear. She wanted all of the man, wished him to single her out and let the others go hang. This he must do—for all the world to see. The world must see that Natalie Edgecumb at least had not shown him the way. So she hung out her boards for him, as for everyone else. Jonathan respected their warnings, naturally enough: he could hardly be expected to divine that he alone was to ignore their burden. The position was inviting disaster as plain as could be.

If Natalie played her cards badly, Jonathan played none at all. He looked upon his cousin and loved her, frowned at the notice-boards, sighed and returned to his ball. Only their blood relation prevented the gulf between them from becoming a sea. And once their great-uncle was dead . . .

George Stone Ludlow died in his sleep on a starlit midsummer eve, some three months after the dinner at which he had told his two relatives what to expect. Not until the obsequies were over did each of the cousins receive a copy of the Will.

This was commendably brief.

By its provisions, J. G. Forsyth, Solicitor, was appointed sole Trustee, Jonathan Baldric became master of Buckram Place and Natalie Edgecumb mistress of 37 St. James's Square: each of the legatees was to receive the income of four hundred thousand pounds, so long as they 'regularly inhabited and faithfully maintained' their respective properties.

Natalie stood at a window which commanded a slice of Mayfair and admitted the roar of the battle which the traffic continually waged.

Her mourning suited her well, declared her beauty, insisted on her exquisite shape. The pink and white magic of her skin, the warm gold of her hair, the slim perfection of her legs, were always notable: the black showed three several wonders, which a man having seen would remember so long as he lived.

The girl stood very still, grave-eyed, hearing the warfare of the traffic and remembering the stately silence of Buckram Place.

A bell throbbed, and she passed to the telephone.

"Yes."

"Mr. Baldric to see you, madam."

"Show him up, please," said Natalie.

A moment later Jonathan entered the room.

He laid down his hat and stick, lowered himself into a chair and closed his eyes.

"Behold me aged," he said. "Too old at twenty-nine. And I don't mind if I never see Lincoln's Inn Fields again. They may have been all right before the lawyers blew in. But now . . ." He shuddered. "There's doom in the very air, documents in the trees, writs in the stones and—""

"What on earth do you mean?" said Natalie.

"My dear," said her cousin, "if you have hopes, prepare to scrap them now. Forsyth was civility itself, and about as helpful as a hangman explaining the drop. The Will's like a slab of cast iron on a snowy day. Monkey with it, and it bites. . . . I'm the comic squire of Buckram and you're the lovely châtelaine of St. James's Square. And nothing this side of witchcraft can cross it out."

"But, surely-"

"Yes, I'm tired of that phrase," said Jonathan. "I'm surfeited with it. If I've used it once this morning, I've used it a thousand times. I tell you, the thing's above grammar and any construction I know. Even blasphemy won't faze it. The Will says what it means and blinkin' well means what it says, and, if we want the jujubes, we've got to swallow the rules. Talking of drink . . ."

Natalie pointed to a sideboard.

With a grateful look, her cousin crossed the room and poured himself gin and gingerbeer.

"Did Forsyth say how much of each year we'd have to reside?"

"Nine perishin' months," said Jonathan, over the rim of his glass. "I bit and I scratched for six, but he wouldn't budge."

Natalie took her seat upon the arm of a

"When are we to start?" she demanded.

"As soon as may be," said her cousin.
"The servants don't know where they stand. Whether they're sacked or kept on is for us to decide. An' the bailiff keeps wirin' from Buckram about some right of way. I've no idea what it means, but it seems there's a horse-pond involved."

"That's right," said Natalie. "You'd better go down to-night. Odd Acre's always watered at Firefly Splash. The people who've bought Jay's Hanger are trying to close the lane on the left-hand side. They've not a shadow of right. The lane's been open for twenty-five years or more. And the water at Firefly's better than anywhere else. But you don't want a lawsuit, and so you must snuff them out."

Her cousin regarded her dazedly. Presently he set down his glass.

"Can't be done," he said weakly.
"Geography was always beyond me, and——"

"But you must," cried Natalie. "You can't sit down and quietly watch an outrage committed on one of your farms. Besides, it's not faithful maintenance."

"Can't help that," said Jonathan. "I'm—I'm not equal to it. Why can't the bailiff——"

"Because you're the head. An attack on a right of way is a frightfully serious thing. You must go down to-night and bust it. It only needs a gesture, and the others 'll crumple up."

Her cousin sank into a chair and mopped his face.

"I don't know any gestures," he said.

"At least, not the sort you mean. As to busting a right of way '—well, I can't even spell it. I—I don't know where to begin."

"You're not busting a right of way," screamed Natalie. "You're keeping it alive.

The whole idea——"

"All right, all right," said Jonathan. "I thought I was to do it in. But it doesn't make any odds. I'm just as incapable of busting it as of saving the wallah's life. And any way, I'm not going down. If Holly can't work the oracle, God's Acre 'll have to go round another way."

"Jonathan, I beg you——"

"My dear, it's no good. I can't put over the grand seigneur and father-of-'ispeople, and I'm blinkin' well not going to try. More. I shall have plenty of chances of making a blue-based fool of myself without mixin' it with my neighbour over a scent I can't smell. If you like to go and represent me——"

"How can I?" said Natalie. "Besides, if I'm to enter St. James's Square, I must

see a builder at once."

"A builder," said Jonathan. "Why?"
"To fill in the basement," said Natalie.
"I know it's damp. And a ground-floor kitchen—"

"I refuse," said her cousin excitedly. "I mean, I protest. That isn't maintenance: that's destruction—layin' indecent waste. You can't have a kitchen on the street in St. James's Square. And what about all the wine?"

"The workmen can move it."

"The workmen?" screamed Jonathan.
"The work— Oh, Moses' button boots!"
"What's the matter?" said Natalie.

"Angina pectoris," said her cousin, covering his eyes. "That cellar at St. James's Square is holy ground. It's not a cellar at all: it's a treasury. It ought to be scheduled as an ancient monument. There are bins there you oughtn't to talk about, except in Church."

"I don't propose to talk about them," said Natalie. "But I'm not going to settle down in a house that's damp. Besides, as I was saying, I don't like a basement kitchen. If they take down the library wall——"

"I can't bear it," said Jonathan wildly. "There's the finest residence in London, absolutely perfect from bottom to top, and you want to turn it into something between a gun emplacement and a railway buffet. Besides, it has memories for me."

"What about Buckram?" said Natalie.

"How do you think I feel to see you letting that lovely estate go west?"

"It's entirely different," cried Jonathan.
"What's the closing of a one-eyed mule-run
compared with the sacking of a shrine?"

"Ît's all the world to Odd Acre," flashed Natalie, "the second-best farm you've got. They wouldn't swap the water at Firefly for the wine at St. James's Square."

Jonathan loosened his collar and wiped the sweat from his face. Then he rose and passed to a window, to look down upon the street. Presently he took a deep breath.

"There is a way out," he said quietly, "a clean way out of the pass. I didn't mean to mention it, for fear you would take offence. But I laid it before Forsyth, to see what he'd say: and he confirmed my opinion that, if ever this course was taken, the Will couldn't stand in the way."

Natalie said nothing, and after a while he went on.

"I mean our marriage. That would make you mistress of Buckram, and—and we could discuss the—the improvements at St. James's Square. And—well, of course I shouldn't bother you. You'd spend as much time at Buckram as ever you pleased, and—well, you'd know where to find me, if ever you wanted me down."

"A marriage of convenience?" said Natalie.

"I—I should be very proud of my wife. And she would have nothing to fear."

"Are you content to do this?"

The man turned.

"Very well content," he said. "I've everything to gain and nothing to lose." Natalie raised her eyebrows.

"Let's keep on the ground," she said.
"This is a business transaction, and it won't look pretty dressed up. You're ready to sell yourself, if I'll do the same?"

The man shook his head.

"I'm afraid I'm not," he said slowly. "What makes the deal possible for me is that I'm dealing with you. It's right that you should know that. I've been half in love with you for more than two years. That I've never got any further has not been my fault: but, under the circumstances, perhaps it's as well. So you see, I'm not selling myself, and it's rather a one-sided deal."

Natalie rose to her feet, crossed to a table and took up a cigarette. She did this in self-defence. Her brain was rebelling, refused to obey her will. She wished to reply to her cousin: instead, she could only dwell upon what he had said.

'Half in love with you for more than two

years . . . not my fault. . . . '

As she lighted her cigarette—

"I hope very much," said the man, "that you'll take no account of that. You needn't even believe it. I probably shouldn't have told you, if I'd been a business man. And, as I've said, I shan't bother you. I only wished you to know that, if you came in on the deal, you'd be paying considerably higher than I." He took a deep breath. "And now will you fire me out, or shall I go?"

Natalie's brain cleared.

"To be perfectly honest," she said, "I think you deserve another drink."

Jonathan raised his eyes to heaven.

"I wish," he said, "there was dust on your little shoes. Then I could make a light lunch." He turned to the sideboard. "Are you quite sure you can't play with some ginger-beer?"

"I'll try," said Natalie. "And thank you very much for breaking my fall. I should hate to have been married entirely

for my '34 port."

Her cousin looked over his shoulder, bottle

in hand.

"Happily," he said, "I am not a vain man. Otherwise. . . I mean—well, I'd rather be married for my cellar than Blowfly Splash. By the way, will you go down?"

Natalie nodded.

"But I must have a warrant," she said.
"Of course," said Jonathan. "'The beautiful bearer having become my betrothed, I hereby——'"

"An engagement ring would be simpler."
But, what a brain," said the man. "I'll seek one at once. Are you above rubies?"

"Not the best ones," said Natalie.

"Good," said Jonathan. "If I find what I want, you'll have to dim it at night."

"What about the size? Shall I—"

Jonathan bowed.

"I don't think that's necessary," he said.
"No one who knows them as I do could ever forget your hands."

He brought her glass to her and returned for his own.

"Well, here's luck," said Natalie. "I hope you'll be very happy."

Jonathan raised his glass.

"I can hardly congratulate you: but here's your very good health."

There were moments when Natalie Edge-

cumb was frightened at what she had done.

She would soon belong to the man whom she wished to own her—as the result of as deliberate and cold-blooded a deal as ever was done. She, the unapproachable, had 'gone with' 37 St. James's Square.

The woman of substance raised her eyebrows and smiled. It was an age of commerce, but such deals were not done every day. She had got the man she wanted: Buckram was hers. Assets like those were fantastic: before them Criticism was dumb.

But the lovesick girl was scared. She had purchased a man who might have come to love her: she had studiously loaded the dice against herself. Worse. She had ended the game which she had played so badly, and how to start the new one she did not know. Jonathan would not start it—the honour was hers. And how on earth could she start it? The slightest gesture she made would have a new significance, could mean but one thing, would be, in fact, a blunt request to be loved.

The lovesick girl wrote two letters, to break the engagement off: the woman of substance re-read them and tore them up: and Natalie lingered at Buckram when she

ought to have been in Town.

If Jonathan had his misgivings, he thrust them aside. Marriage to-day was always a sticky affair: logs were rolled, axes were ground, backs were scratched: if ever Love sat at the board, it was somewhere below the salt. He could count himself most lucky to have got the best house in London and the girl of his choice. That such possession had put her out of his reach was certainly a fly in the ointment: he steadfastly refused to consider that the interloper might breed.

'The marriage will be very quiet, and the honeymoon will be spent on the Italian Lakes.'

So said the society reporters—and spoke more truly than they knew.

It had been privately arranged that Natalie should favour Como, while Jonathan fleeted the days by Maggiore.

This idea had been Jonathan's and had been presented with a lazy nonchalance which no one would have suspected of concealing regard. Indeed, throughout the engagement the man behaved very well. He paid his respects, did escort duty, saw the girl through formality—all with an easy

friendliness before which embarrassment fled. Neither gallant, nor casual, he steered a most delicate course, yet gave the constant

impression that he was drifting.

The girl was thankful—and desperate. Here were the footings of a wall which, once raised, she would never break down. One might have dealt with difficulty: out of a dilemma anything might have come: as it was, her path being made so smooth, there was nothing to do but walk down it day after day. . . .

So till the first of August, on which day they were to be wed.

The wedding was to take place at two o'clock.

At a quarter to two Natalie received a bouquet, accompanied by a note, the superscription of which was in Jonathan's hand.

The envelope contained two documents. One was a cheque for six thousand two hundred pounds.

The other was a letter from a firm of wine-merchants.

Jonathan Baldric, Esq.

Sir,

In accordance with the terms of our agreement to purchase the contents of the cellar at 37 St. James's Square, we beg to say that the removal of the wine has now been completed and to enclose our cheque, made payable, as you directed, to Mrs. Baldric, for six thousand two hundred pounds.

We have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servants,

---- AND CO.

There had been no reception, but fifty friends had been dealt with at ——'s Hotel: the bride was changing: and the bridegroom was sitting in the lounge, with a cigarette in his mouth and both his eyes on the clock.

Lady 'Sue' Fustian, who had attended the bride, emerged from the lift and crossed to where Jonathan sat. As he rose to his

feet, she put out her hands.

"Jonathan," she said, "I'm just going. I think you might have kissed me in the vestry, but I shall try to forget. Don't be away too long: we shall miss you both. And Natalie wants me to say she'd like to see you upstairs."

Two minutes later Jonathan entered the room where, six weeks before, his marriage had been arranged.

This was empty.

After a glance at the door which led to a

bedroom, Jonathan passed to a window and stood, looking down upon a Rolls. This was a claret-coloured cabriolet, perfectly appointed, gleaming from stem to stern. Its chauffeurs sat like images, looking steadily through the windscreen, giving their dignity rein. Directly behind was another, but wholly closed car, with luggage. carefully shrouded, upon its roof. Beside this stood Jonathan's valet, with his hand on the door.

"Oh, the weddin'-gift," said the man. "Bridegroom's present to the bride." He sank into a chair. "I'm not sure you can't arrest me for sellin' your wine."
"Why did you do it?" said Natalie.

"If you simply must know," said her husband, "I did it to remove an impression." He crossed his legs. "You had an impression that I was a-marryin' you for the cellar of wine you'd got in St. James's Square, or, at any rate, that the liquor that



A rustle, and there was Natalie, papers in hand.

"M'dear," said her husband, "the carriage continues to wait."

"I know," said Natalie. "I've seen it. It looks very nice."

"It'll have to go very nice, if we're to dine at Folkestone with any sort of content."

"I know. I can't help it. That's the worst of a wife." She held out the cheque and the letter. "Jonathan, why did you do this terrible thing? How could you-" lay therein had gone towards makin' the match. I don't blame you. I'm a notorious wine-bibber, and, if I remember rightly, the deal we've just done rose, so to speak, like Aphrodite, from the foam of the must. Well, there you are. The clearer I saw the impression, the less I liked it. It offended me, m'dear, and so I removed it."

"Why did it offend you?" said Natalie.
"Because it wasn't fair. My sense of justice was irked. We may have done a deal, but, as I tried to tell you six weeks

ago, a proper deal has two sides, and this has only got one. I've all four boots on my feet. Girls like you don't go with wines and spirits or anything else. Their face and their ways are their fortune, and nothing else counts."

"Did you do it because you were 'half in love with' me?"

Jonathan got to his feet.

"I suppose I did," he said slowly. "But I think we can wash that out. I swear it wasn't a gesture. I felt that this deal of ours was involving a slight—which you deserved rather less than any woman I know. And so, in my clumsy way, I sought to cut the slight out. I admit I'm a rotten bad surgeon, but there you are. An' now, havin' stripped my soul, what about the Folkestone road? The family coach is waitin', and—"

"I like to think," said Natalie, "that the reason why you did it was because you were half in love. I mean, that intrigues a woman much more than the thought that you did it to do her justice or something like that. If you do her justice, her vanity is disappointed: it's like giving her something useful: but, if you do something because you are half in love, her vanity of vanities is touched. And, by the way, if ever you're all in love, you might let me know."

Jonathan started forward.

"Natalie!"

The girl put up a small hand.

"I only mean that then I'll consider your claims. I want to be——"

"Consider them now," said her husband, taking her hand. "Say 'This fool would have loved me, if I'd given him half a chance.' Say 'I took him because I had to, but——'"

"That wouldn't be true," said Natalie.
"Near enough," said the man. "Buck-

Natalie withdrew her hand, flung herself on to a sofa and burst into tears.

Distressed beyond measure, her husband sat down beside her and stroked and patted the shoulder which he could reach.

"Natalie darling—my dear, I can't bear you to cry. I shouldn't have said what I did. I never meant to presume—I never will. I'm just your jolly good friend—remember that. I'll see you safe to Como, and—"

A hand came out, seeking his.

Suppressing the impulse to kiss it, Jonathan held it fast.

So for a little space. Then Natalie sat up straight, with her other hand to her eyes.

"Listen," she said. "I've got to tell you the truth. You think I'm white: but I'm not. I've played the rottenest game. A month before George Stone died, he showed me his Will. He'd left me Buckram, and you St. James's Square. I asked him to alter it, Jonathan—leave them the other way round." The man started violently. "You see, I thought it might help me to marry the man I loved."

Jonathan gave a great cry.

Then he took her two arms and put them about his neck. When he spoke, his voice was trembling.

"My beautiful darling," he said, "tell me one thing. Didn't he tell you I loved you?"

Natalie nodded.

" Ah."

"And I thought you did—in a way. But I wanted all of you, Jonathan. And I thought if once you had me, if once you could look at me and say 'This is mine,' I thought that then perhaps you wouldn't look anywhere else."

Jonathan kissed her lips.

"I've adored you," he said, "from a distance, ever since I knew what was what. If ever I'd had a close-up, I should have gone over the edge. But that you wouldn't give me."

"You should have taken it," said Natalie.
"I tell you, I'm a woman of substance—I hold what I have . . . until someone who's stronger than me comes and takes it away."

Jonathan held her close.

"I know. I understand. It's in the blood. I never knew how much I loved you until I came into this room ten minutes ago."

His wife laid her cheek against his. . . . Presently a mischievous smile stole into her face.

"It's my duty to remind you," she whispered, "that the family coach has been waiting—"

"Let it wait," shouted Jonathan. "I've waited for more than two years, and, now that I've got the bowling, I won't be rushed. Of course, if you feel you must be going . . ."

Natalie's cool fingers came to rest on his

mouth.

# FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

# By FRANCIS WARD, M.D., F.Z.S.

NSTINCTIVELY you take a dislike to a man who is described as having a face like a pig. Strictly speaking, the remark merely implies that the features of the person in question and those of a pig are similar in appearance, but subconsciously your mind pictures a coarse, uncouth individual. As a rule this sur-

couth individual. As a rule this surmise is without foundation, as porcine features and porcine characteristics

seldom go together.

There is a big heavy man who lives down our way. He has rolls of fat on his face, his eyes have almost sunk out of sight, he has a short upper lip, and he possesses half a dozen chins. Except in facial expression this man in no way resembles a pig, for a pig is an expressionless beast that wallows in mire and grunts; whereas Mr. Smith's face is always wreathed in smiles, and when he laughs his whole face shakes, and his eyes disappear altogether.

Smith is a jolly good fellow, the life and 'soul of our village. His word is law at the 'Horse and Hounds" and he is the best churchwarden our Vicar ever had.

It is a different proposition when a man resembles a "walrus." Look at Mr. Gubbins. His features are coarse, his cheeks hang like deflated balloons, he has a massive upper lip and a receding chin. Gubbins's

expression never alters: the family have it for breakfast, and he takes it with him to lunch at the club, where he is always allowed a table to himself. In the evening, when young Montgomery comes to dine and entertain his wife, he feeds this face: and after



TOBY, THE SEAL, WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE.

dinner, at the theatre, where his young wife, Montgomery, and the chorus enjoy the new revue, Gubbins's flabby features sag in repose. How different from the animal he is supposed to resemble.

Let a young walrus spark but come within "glad-eye" distance of his mate, and the jealous animal, with a mighty roar, will



ALARM AND DISGUST.



"WHERE IS THAT DOG NOW ! "

hurl himself at the audacious intruder. True, at times the walrus may wear a Gubbins expression, but only when he is depressed, when perhaps an Eskimo has harpooned his loving wife, or a team of starving sleigh dogs have been fed on his bouncing baby boy. But these troubles over, like all other males, he will soon console himself with another mate. Now watch his proud expression as his second wife playfully flaps their half-ton progeny.

In the same way a seal's face is

full of expression.

Some time ago a common grey seal, Toby by name, came to my observation ponds in order that I might make some records of his under-water movements.

This animal was an understudy to a clown with a troupe of performing sea-lions:



"I'LL JUST IGNORE THEM."

the troupe had gone to South Africa, and Toby had been temporarily housed at the London Zoo, whence he paid me a visit. He arrived during a tennis party. The shortest route to the observation ponds was across the courts, and you should have seen the surprised expressions of the guests as Toby, uttering loud grunts, flopped after a

For a time the arrival of the seal interrupted play, but when the guests had fed him with a bucket full of herrings—two days' rations—the replete beast scrambled on to a rock, where he basked in the sun with a contented smile upon his face. Tim, the terrier, had something to say to this, as with bristling mane he barked at the weird stranger.

bucket of herrings.

Now alarm and disgust were depicted upon Toby's features, and soon he dropped off the rock into the water.



TONY, THE BARN OWL, HATES TO BE DISTURBED.

Once below the surface his fear disappeared and he seemed to say, "Where is that dog now?"

With man, emotions such as pleasure and disgust may be shown by a smile or a

sneer without any evident body movements. For example, the heartless villain, unaffected by the pathetic appeals of the beautiful weeping woman, never moves a muscle; yet the sneer on his hard features reveals his evil intentions.

With animals, on the other hand, some characteristic attitude or action almost invariably accompanies a facial expression indicating a particular emotion. As an example, your terrier may stroll down the garden path, but as he reaches the gate you see his lip curl and there is murder in his eye; this, however, is not all, for now he stiffens his whole body and stands rigid

on his toes, while the hairs on his neck and arched back stick up like the quills on a porcupine.

Without leaving the window, you know that he has seen your neighbour's cur from up the street.



"BORED!"







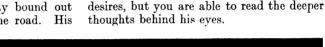
THE EAGLE OWL USED HORRIBLE LANGUAGE.

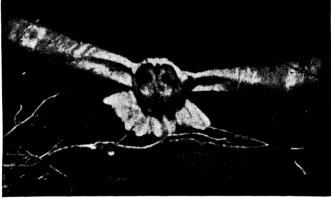
On the other hand, he may bound out and drop in the middle of the road. His

and drop in the initiate of paws are extended in front and between them he buries his chin, his eyes twinkling with merriment. Here, regardless of passing cars, he will remain until the time comes to rush forward and meet the delightful puppy from over the way.

Of all animals, the dog undoubtedly comes the nearest to man in being able to express himself by features alone. When your dog wants to go out he does not bark or jump at the door but just looks at

you, and as your mutual friendship ripens not only do you understand his obvious





OWLS ARE FREQUENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH GHOST STORIES.

The cat family are less demonstrative, but they also combine action with facial

expression. Watch a cat crouch under a bush and glare intently into the shrubbery. You may not be able to see the gleam in his eye, but you cannot miss the spasmodic twitch at the end of the tail which expresses his excitement. The same twitch with the tiger is a sure sign that this giant cat is about to spring on his prey.

Turning next to bird expressions, have you ever heard a modern maiden describe her respectable spectacled guardian as a silly old owl, when, with an expressionle's face, he has refused an advance on her allowance.



PREPARE TO SHUDDER.

notwithstanding the fact that she has "not a rag

to put on?"

Do not imagine because of this comparison that the owl is either silly or lacking in expression. from it, for if human beings were to reveal their feelings as clearly as does the owl, they would soon find themselves unpopular. You have only to look at the pictures of Tony, the

barn owl, to appreciate the point. Tony was a "character" and in consequence was frequently on show; he hated to be disturbed, and when visitors came you could plainly see him say:



"Good heavens! Whom has the man brought now?"

"I'm utterly sick of his friends."

"Well, I'll just ignore them."

Then there was the eagle owl, a great big vicious bird whom nobody could tame.

as this owl was called, was not only vicious but used horrible language. When you went into his enclosure he would ask, "What do you want?" Then he would puff out all his feathers and swear, looking so ferocious that most of his visitors would hurriedly retire. Then Tiny, with a pleased expression, obviously said, "That frightened them, but then I'm some eagle owl!"

The quaint gestures, the peculiar flight, the fact that the bird flies at



THE PIKE READY TO ATTACK.

night, all add to the strange appearances of the owl family, and so it is not surprising that owls are frequently associated with ghost stories.

Do you think of a fish as a cold and expres-

sionless creature? If so. watch a pike from underwater; for hours he will lie motionless outside a reed-bed with the muscles of his back relaxed, so that it appears to be arched, while the eye is dull and he seems to be taking no notice of anything. Suddenly there is a sparkle in his eye, and the dorsal fin on his back is rigidly erected, the afterrays being rapidly ex-

tended and approximated, like the opening and shutting of a lady's fan. The pike has seen a shoal of small fish in the distance, but he does not move in case he should frighten them; the gleam in his eye and the erection of the dorsal fin are



THE COTTUS ON THE DEFENSIVE.

the only manifestations of his suppressed excitement.

Should he now straighten the back and raise himself from the ground, you know that he has decided to attack; carefully he glides forward until within striking distance, then a rush, a swirl on the surface, a scattering of small fish, and one of the shoal has been seized across the middle. An illustration is given of a pike during this final approach; were you to see a man coming

towards you with this expression in his eye, you would instinctively clench your fists.

Many fish show intense excitement at the spawning season. The heavy carp will plunge about among the reeds so that his splashings can be heard at a considerable distance; the common brown trout will keep up a running fight for days together against heavier fish, in order to retain his selected mate. The homely stickleback will give his life in defence of his nest, and when the young sticklebacks arrive he is so assiduous in guarding them and in preventing them from straying that often he has not time to feed, so that when his paternal duties are completed he dies of exhaustion.

Even at subterfuge a fish can hold its own, an assumed ferocious expression playing an important part. This is well illustrated by the cottus and the blenny, two of our com-



CAMEL TAKING IN THE FUMES FROM A CIGARE

monest rock pool fishes. The former is armed with strong spines on its gill covers, while the fin-rays are extended as sharp spikes. When attacked, the cottus expands these gill covers and the fins are erected. Experience has taught the enemies of this fish to leave it alone, and the punishment inflicted by its armament is certainly associated in their minds with its ferocious appearance and expression when on the defensive.

The blenny is a soft, slimy fish, but when danger threatens he blows out his cheeks and erects his fins in a similar manner and so escapes. Pure bluff on the part of the blenny, but judging by the numbers to be found in the pools round our rocky shores, the bluff is eminently successful.

It is easy to judge when an animal is pleased by the look on its face. This expression is generally associated with food or some special luxury. Occasionally dogs, cats and even birds have been taught to

take alcoholic drinks, for which they have subsequently acquired a liking, but to appreciate tobacco is quite exceptional.

During the War the author was responsible for the camels attached to his ambulance: several of the animals would share cigarette with their attendant, but one in particular craved for a smoke.

The ecstatic expression on his face as he inhaled fumes was most striking.



" DELICIOUS ! "

# 

# By RALPH DURAND

#### ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

► ILIBULA, the headquarters of the Administration of British Megobaniland, is not a beautiful spot, except perhaps by moonlight, which has a magic power to etherealise even galvanisediron roofs. At high noon at the beginning of the dry season it is starkly ugly, for then the grass on either side of its one twohundred-yards-long road is taller than a man and shuts off all view except that over Lake Madzikulu, and it is impossible to look out across the lake without screwing up the eyes because of the pitiless steel-grey glare. Yet as he hunched his shoulders because of a dust-devil that swirled into the verandah and felt a waft of hot air run up the sleeve of his linen jacket, Peter Darrell, formerly Collector of the Wanazoa District of Megobaniland, sighed with content and remarked that it was good to be back in Central Africa

"What a hot-headed young ass you were to chuck your job," remarked the Commissioner. "I guessed that you had somehow fallen foul of the big-pots at home because I was called on to send a detailed confidential report on the way you had run your district since you first took it over. I sent a thumping good report, strong enough to have got you promotion, yet before it has time to reach home you turn up here and tell me that you have chucked your job. Why on earth did you do it?"

"A blighter of a Permanent Official in Whitehall had been giving me a wigging, saying that I was a head-strong, self-opinionated ass who preferred running my own show to obeying orders, and that I was to be transferred to Lagos or some place where my superiors could keep an eye on me. I didn't want to be sent anywhere except back to the Wanazoa, people I understand and who understand me, but it was only when he told me that for reasons

of economy my district was to be abandoned that I chucked my job. You see, I gave the Akapolo an absolute promise that they should be protected from the Wanazoa so long as the British Government endured. I never dreamt that after once letting me hoist the Union Jack the Government would order it to be hauled down again."

"I expect it will prove an expensive kind of economy," said Sir Humphrey Stark gloomily. "If the Wanazoa do start raiding the Akapolo again, they will have their blood-lust whetted and their raiding-parties will come down the lake shore in this direction. Then if an Expeditionary Force isn't sent up to spank them and drive them home again, other tribes will get their tails up and the trouble will spread till the settled districts five hundred miles to the south will be compelled to stand to

"And meanwhile the Wanazoa will have burned all the Akapolo's villages, looted their cattle, and carried off their women and my promise will have been broken."

"And you think that you can keep the Wanazoa in order if you go back to them

as a private individual?"

"I think there's a chance. Old Matipa likes me. The Wanazoa have learned to obey me. I shan't have any power over them except what I can get by bluff; but when you come to think of it, I never did have much else. A bodyguard of twelve King's African Riflemen isn't much of a force with which to keep a whole tribe in order. I can try, at any rate."

Sir Humphrey Stark laid his hand on the

younger man's shoulder.

"I won't tell you what I think of you because that might give you a swelled head. For a man to give up all you are going to give up in order to keep a promise made to a pack of ignorant savages is a pretty

big thing. But you're a married man now. What about your wife?"

"Winifred is the right sort. She agrees with me that I can't let the Akapolo down."

"And she realises the danger?"

"Absolutely. She's been in a tight place before, you know-at the Mission Station with the Rocks."

"I hope you'll succeed. I'm due for my pension in six months' time, and I'm going to take it because all through my career I've seen the harm that is done by fellows who hang on to their jobs when they have grown too old to run them properly. I should hate the country to be in a mess just when I am leaving it. I believe you'll succeed. But mind you-you'll catch it in the neck if you fail."

"You mean that the Wanazoa will decorate a stockade-pole with my head?"

"I mean that you'll catch it from the Government if you fail. What you intend to do is practically to make yourself an uncrowned king over the Wanazoa. If you succeed--as Rajah Brooke succeeded when he did the same thing in Sarawak—the Government will load you with honours. If you fail, it will call you a filibuster and ugly names of that sort, and shove you into the dock at Bow Street-if it can catch you-to stand your trial."

" Why?"

"If the Wanazoa raid the Akapolo in spite of you, what will you do?"

"Organise the Akapolo to resist them."

"That's just it. You will make war without the authority of your sovereign. I'm not a lawyer, but I believe that under the Foreign Enlistment Act that's a criminal offence. Don't make any mistake, my lad. You've got to succeed. It's glory or the gallows for you."

In Africa, as elsewhere, difficulties that are resolutely faced tend to disappear. When an African gives his loyalty he gives it with both hands. The Wanazoa accepted Darrell's unauthorised rule as readily as they had accepted it when he had made laws in the name of the Great White King —a far-away potentate as to whose real existence they had some doubt. His first difficulty arose, not from his savage subjects, but from a man technically of his own nationality.

He was sitting in his hut one evening, feeling acutely that Winifred's presence made it a home instead of merely a shelter from sun and rain, when a small party of carriers came to the boma and dropped their loads inside the stockade. A white man dressed in a suit of soiled drill separated from them, and, without lifting his hat or taking any other notice of Winifred's presence, offered Darrell a very dirty hand.

It would be ridiculous for two white men meeting in a remote part of Central Africa to regard the social distinctions that carry weight in Mayfair. It was not because the man's manners proclaimed him quite obviously not to be a gentleman, it was not even because he looked like a Levantine dago, that Darrell felt an awkwardness in greeting him. There was something subtly repulsive about the man that seemed to contaminate a place graced by Winifred's

"My name is Demetrious—Paulo Demetrious," said the stranger, seating himself in the chair that Darrell reluctantly offered him. "Perhaps you would like to see my papers. You'll see that I'm a British subject."

Darrell's prejudices were not lessened when he discovered that Demetrious was the son of a Greek father and a Syrian mother, and that Britons had acquired him as a compatriot by the accident of his having been born in a Maltese prison.

"I'm a trader," continued Demetrious. "Up till now, anywhere in Portuguese territory has been my beat, but I thought that I would go a bit farther afield. Is it necessary for me to register or take out a licence

or anything of that kind?"

Darrell, who hated lying, admitted to him that the official administration had been withdrawn, and briefly explained as much as he thought necessary of his reasons for

being in the district.

"I see," said Demetrious. "You used to screw these people's tails for the benefit of the British Government, and now you have come back to screw them for your own. You're not the only man that's hit on the same idea, but it's not so easy to do now as it was in the good old days. I heard a rumour that the Government had left this district to look after itself. That's what brought me up from Portuguese territory. And when I heard about you from a Wanazoa guide that I collared, I was pretty sick, I can tell you. I've no use for magistrates. They interfere too much. That's why up till now I've worked only Portuguese territory, because there, so long as you don't absolutely shove yourself right under the

nose of a Capitão Mor, you can do pretty

well what you like."

"Transport up from the coast by way of Portuguese territory must be pretty expensive," said Darrell. "I hardly think you'll find it profitable to trade here because you'll have to compete with one of Brazenbridge's agents, who gets his stuff by rail as far as Kilibula and on here by lake-steamer."

Demetrious chuckled.

"But what I bring up from the coast is worth more, weight for weight, than brasswire and cotton goods and stuff of that kind, and what I take back to the coast doesn't need to be transported at all. It goes on its own feet. I'll show you the trade-stuff I carry."

He called to one of his carriers. The man came running with an imitation cutglass bottle, containing a yellowish liquid

and labelled Eau-de-Cologne.

"That's a livelier article than beads or cloth," said Demetrious with a laugh. own idea too. The Brussels Conference prohibited the sale of brandy, whisky, gin and a number of other drinks to African natives, but it never occurred to it to make Eaude-Cologne contraband. A man in Vienna makes and bottles it to my order, overproof potato spirit, colouring matter and some scented oil or other. Costs me fourpence a pint landed on the coast, and I defy anyone to say that I've not a right to call it what I like, or forbid my selling it to niggers. And it sells like hot cakes. A nigger will get more drunk on a cupful of that stuff than he would on a pint of straight gin."

"Mr. Demetrious," said Winifred suddenly. "I hope you will stay and have a meal with us. It's such a treat to us to see a new face. You really must let us make

the most of it."

Darrell was amazed. He wondered if it were possible that Winifred did not realise what an utterly obnoxious bounder the man was. His life in Africa had kept him out of touch with drawing-room insincerities, and he could only suppose that Winifred had asked the man to stay to supper because she wanted him to stay. If she already felt so hungry for the sight of a new face that she could welcome a man like Demetrious, how would she regard the lonely years ahead of her?

"You bet I'll stay," said Demetrious.

"That will be delightful," said Winifred.

As Demetrious expressed no desire to wash his hands or make any other preparation for the meal, Peter had no opportunity to tell Winifred what he thought of her guest, and when Chiteema brought in the soup he

was very nearly sulky.

"And now," said Demetrious, "I've a business proposition to make. You aren't in this country for your health, of course, any more than I am. We are both of us out for what we can get, and when two men have a field pretty well to themselves, it is better for them to be partners than rivals. I told you that what I take back to the coast transports itself. Black ivory is what I deal in. I recruit labour in the interior for work on the coast plantations."

"I've heard some fishy stories about the Indentured Labour business," said Darrell, "that it isn't much else than the slave-trade under a new name. Is it true that the planters don't let the men go when their

contracts have expired?"

Demetrious winked.

"That's not my affair," he said. "I get ten pounds a man when I hand the labour over. That's all that troubles ma."

"Is it easy to get the labour?" asked Winifred.

"As easy as falling off a log. The first thing I do on going into a kraal is to open a bottle or two of Eau-de-Cologne and stand drinks all round. Then I say that I want to engage men to work and that I'll pay each man I engage a month's wages in advance—in Eau-de-Cologne. The old men in the kraal at once bring up their sons to enlist because it's the fathers who'll have the month's wages. And the young men don't mind enlisting because they think that they need only come a day or two's march with me and then desert and push off home again. But when I've started them on the march I make them drunk every evening and each morning give them just enough to pull them round and make them able to take the road. They won't be in a hurry to desert while there are free drinks going. Then one night, when I've collected enough labour to make it worth my while to push off for the coast, I make them all dead-drunk, and when they come to themselves next morning each man finds himself chained to the next by the wrist with a fathom length of good stout dog-chain. In the old days the Arabs used to fasten them in twos, one at each end of a log that they had to carry on their shoul-A fool's trick that. It used to wear them out so that some of them died on the road. I like to land my black ivory in good condition."

"It sounds profitable," said Peter sneer-

ingly

You bet it is profitable! And it's honest too. I don't take any but volunteers. If the volunteers don't know what they are letting themselves in for, that's not my look-The hitch to the business is that one can never play the same game twice in one neighbourhood. One has to go to new the old rhyme may have leered at the fly that it invited into its parlour.

"It's easy to see which of you has the business head," he said banteringly. suggest that between us we can make one big scoop. As your husband knows the district and the local niggers better than I do, my idea is that he should start some sort of plantation here as an excuse for getting a lot of

> labour together. I'll recruit for it. There would be no difficulty in getting them to come and work so near their homes, and of course he'd have to treat them well to keep them contented and fat. Then when we'd collected a good number, something worth handling, say two or three hundred head, I'd take them over, rush them past their homes by long night marches, get them to the coast and dispose of them. We'll share profits on a fifty-fifty basis." Darrell pushed back his chair and rose from the table. He felt that



"'That's a livelier article than beads or cloth,' said Demetrious, with a laugh . . . 'And it sells like hot cakes,'"

country every journey. I've pretty well worked out the Portuguese territory, and when the rumour went about that the British Government had withdrawn from this end of Lake Madzikulu, I thought I'd better come up here and break fresh

"And what exactly is it," asked Winifred, "that you want my husband to do?"

Demetrious leered at her as the spider of

he could not tolerate this Græco-Syrian ornament of the British Empire a moment longer.

"If I ever saw you again, I suppose you mean," he said sarcastically. "Perhaps you might forget to come back to give me my share of the profits. I don't so much object to you thinking me as big a blackguard as yourself, Mr. Demetrious, as I do to your thinking me a fool." He put a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast. At once a score of the askari that he had recruited to take the place of his bodyguard of King's African Riflemen emerged from the huts that had been the Riflemen's barracks and came running, halted within three paces of Darrell, lifted their spears in salute and stood waiting for orders.

"I am going to give these men orders to search your loads and smash every bottle they find," said Darrell. "Would you like to go with them and see that they damage

nothing else?"

"I'll put a bullet into any one of them that touches my loads," shouted Demetrious, jumping up and drawing a revolver. But as he did it Darrell snatched up a stick and struck him a smart blow on the funny bone. The revolver dropped from his fingers and the headman of the askari promptly picked it up.

"If you give any trouble," said Darrell, "my men will take you down to the lake and wash you. You had better clear out, I think. If I run across you again it will

be the worse for you."

Demetrious prudently went a few steps beyond the reach of Darrell's fist, then turned.

"I know what your little game is," he "You want to be the only man in the field. You want to squeeze the niggers and get all the juice for yourself. I'm a white man, aren't I? I'm a British subject, aren't I? I've as good a right here as you have. You look out, my bonny boy. I haven't done with you by a long chalk. You'll see me again when you're least expecting it, and when you do see me I'll make you sorry for yourself. You watch it that I don't give you a lesson in the way I treat niggers that cross my hawse. -you-you-" Demetrious's breath and his flow of ideas failed him at the same moment. He spat as far as he could spit in Winifred's direction, and presently they heard him swearing at his carriers, telling them to pack up and march.

"There are people at home," snorted Darrell, "who say that European governments have no moral right to establish white man's rule in Africa. They don't seem to realise that once a country has been opened up it can never be closed again, and that if it isn't brought under decent rule, ruffians like that beast will have a free hand in it."

"Quite true," said Winifred. "But, Peter dear, you aren't much of a diplomatist, are you? Why do you think I asked that man to dinner?"

"I can't imagine," said Peter, still breathing over-quickly in the excitement of his

anger

Because I saw at the outset what kind of man he was, and I wanted to help you by finding out as much as possible about him."

"We know all about him now, at any rate."

"No, we don't. You ought to have kept him a little longer. Don't you realise that a man who dares not go back to a neighbourhood that he has once visited because of the harm and misery that he has caused there, carries his life in his hands? Don't you suppose that he has more followers than just those he brought here, and don't you want to find out whether they are armed?"

Darrell whistled.

"By Jove, I never thought of that. If I'm King of this country, you ought to be Prime Minister, Winnie. I'll go over to the nearest kraal and find out what's known about him."

"Will anyone there know?"

"The information may not be precisely accurate, but they'll know something. Have you never heard men shouting gossip from hill-top to hill-top? A man can't travel with a large *ulendo* in this country without people knowing about it, and news of his movements travels faster than he can."

Half an hour later Darrell came back

looking very grave.

"You were right, Winnie," he said. "That fellow Demetrious has a big camp about thirty miles from here. He has from fifty to sixty men in his *ulendo*, and each of them carries a modern rifle. A chief through whose district he passed two days ago sent me word of him. His messenger lingered on the road, of course, to tell his news to everybody except myself. If I hadn't gone over to the kraal I shouldn't have heard about it till to-morrow. I came back here to protect the Akapolo against the Wanazoa, but it appears that I've got to protect the Wanazoa against an imitation white man."

"And what are you going to do about

it ? "

"Chase him out of the country, of course. But the question is—how? I'll send a messenger with a letter to Sir Humphrey Stark about him, but I doubt if the Home Government will let him move in the matter. Besides, the messenger will have to go on foot all the way, so the letter will take

about a fortnight to reach Kilibula, and I can't leave Demetrious alone all that time. I'll get the letter off first and then think

out something to do."

"Where do you think I've got an inspiration from?" he said an hour later. "The Latin Grammar. A sentence that I used to have to translate kept running in my head till it gave me an idea. 'Cæsar laid waste the country as far as'—I forget where. That's what I'll have to do. To send naked Wanazoa spearmen against a force armed with sixty modern rifles would be sheer butchery. I won't fight the man. I'll starve him till he surrenders."

It was late on the following evening before Demetrious returned to his main camp, and when he reached it he had not decided how

to revise his plans.

His chance of kidnapping Wanazoa seemed to be gone, for he felt sure that Darrell, who, he was still convinced, lived among the tribe merely to exploit them in some way or other, would, in order to earn their gratitude, broadcast a warning. But he had no intention of returning to the coast empty-handed, especially since he was beginning to tire of a country that had recently seemed to be growing to know too much about him. He ardently wished to bring off some big coup that would enable him to retire and live a life of ease in Persia or Mexico or some other favoured country where the law shows a broad-minded tolerance towards people who have money to spend. Gradually a plan for activities even more profitable than kidnapping began to grow in his mind. had had a long experience of the parts of Africa that are beyond the limits of European control, and he knew that normally in such parts each tribe lives in a state of more or less spasmodic war with its neigh-The scheme that he evolved was to interest himself in tribal politics, blow some long-standing quarrel into a blaze and place himself and his armed followers on the side of the stronger party, on the understanding that his share of the loot was to be any ivory found in the kraals of the vanquished and as many able-bodied captives as were necessary to transport it to the coast. By careful management it should be possible to leave the defeated strong enough to cherish hopes of revenge, so that he could at a suitable moment change sides, wage war on his former allies and thus get from them also such ivory as they might happen to have.

Demetrious was a robber, but he was also a business man. Having roughed out his plan, he took paper and made calculations, not as to the cost of the campaign—his allies, each in their turn, would have to pay that—but as to the profit likely to accrue from it. He knew that elephants were scarce in the neighbourhood of Lake Madzikulu, but had at one time been plentiful. He knew that a sort of jackdaw instinct had for centuries past impelled Africans to hoard ivory, generally burying it under the floors of their huts. He considered that a year's vigorous campaigning, six months against half the tribe, and another six months against the other half, should produce at the very lowest estimate as much ivory as two hundred men could carry. Ivory that has been buried a hundred years does not fetch quite as good a price as fresh ivory, but putting the price of what he might get at as low a figure as £40 a hundredweight, two hundred loads of it should be worth £8,000, and the fees he would get from the planters for transferring to their service the men who carried it would bring the profits up to £10,000. It was worth trying. But first he must clear from his path anyone through whom European Powers might get to know of his activities. His guide had told him that there were two missionaries and a trader in the country. Demetrious determined to start at sunset, make a forced march, covering the distance to Darrell's boma in fourteen or fifteen hours, capture it by surprise, then swoop down on the trader's store and the mission-station before their occupants had time to escape.

The weakest point in an otherwise admirable plan was that it had taken Demetrious three days to make it, during which time all the natives within a day's march of his camp had under Darrell's orders been very busy. Except in the most favoured parts of Central Africa, the route that a ulendo must follow is determined by the position of water. When Demetrious reached the first well on the line of his march towards Darrell's boma, he found it full of newly dug earth. It took his thirsty men twelve hours to clean it out, at the end of which time they were too weary to continue the march. Demetrious let them rest till dawn of the next day, then marched again, but when he found that the next well also needed excavating, he modified his plans. He changed his course and made straight for the lake, reaching it late in the evening at a point eight miles from the boma. But now the

time occupied on the march had lengthened to forty-eight hours, and the chance of capturing the boma by surprise had weakened almost to vanishing point. By this time, Demetrious realised with disgust, Darrell had probably garrisoned it strongly with spearmen. He decided to rest his jaded men till midnight, then march, attack the boma at dawn, and capture it at all costs.

When Darrell wrote to the Commissioner he forgot that a telegraph-line was being laid along the shore of the lake and that it had already reached within a hundred miles of his boma. By good fortune the overseer in charge of the construction camp was a man of sound sense. When a weary runner came into his camp, saying that he had been told to carry a letter to Kilibula with all possible speed, he took on himself the responsibility of opening it and telegraphing its contents in full. Sir Humphrey Stark cabled it on to Whitehall with an addition of his own to the effect that, unless counterordered, he proposed to put a Company of King's African Rifles on to a lake-steamer and take them to arrest Paulo Demetrious. This cablegram a hastily summoned Cabinet met to discuss some hours before that greasy picaroon marched to attack Darrell's boma.

He made for the assault elaborate plans which proved absolutely unnecessary, for he found it deserted. This disconcerted him, for he supposed that Darrell was already in full flight in the direction of Kilibula and would without doubt report his movements to the authorities there. To vent his spite, he set fire to the huts, then marched to the mission-station and found that, too, abandoned. He burned that as well and pushed on to the store. Here he met with another disappointment. It, too, was deserted, but everything worth taking had been carried away. There was nothing to lootnot so much as a sack of grain or a single tin of bully-beef.

This was a serious blow, for in Central Africa a *ulendo* has to live on the country, obtaining food at each kraal through which it passes. More than a week had now passed since Demetrious's visit to Darrell, and the meal-bags that his men carried were nearly empty. He camped in the abandoned galvanised store and sent a dozen men out to buy food at the nearest kraals. They returned with the news that every kraal within ten miles had been abandoned, every head of cattle driven off, every granary emptied.

The news was both disquieting and reassuring: disquieting because he badly needed food for his men; reassuring because it seemed to prove that Darrell was still in the country. Savages may lay waste an enemy's country, but such desperate strategy as devastating their own in order to discomfort an invader would not occur to them unless guided by a master-mind.

Demetrious acted with energy. In order to be able to move as rapidly as possible, he hid all his heavy loads, his cases of Eau-de-Cologne and boxes of reserve ammunition, in a thicket where none but himself and his men was likely to find them, then marched in search of food, following the course of a river so as not again to be hindered by failure to get water. As his ulendo strung along the valley he knew that its movements were watched, for often he heard from a hill-top the shout of a scout announcing its approach to someone farther off. In the river valley kraals were comparatively thickly clustered. He found each gutted and deserted, but the inhabitants had fled in haste, and on the ground by the overturned granaries lay enough grain to be worth sweeping up. In some cases the pigs, too obstinate to drive and too heavy to carry, had been left behind, and once he came on a cow that had been lamed and abandoned.

Demetrious's situation, therefore, though awkward, was as yet by no means desperate. He had two alternatives before him—to abandon his enterprise altogether and return whence he had come, or to collect what food he could and follow the tracks of the herds to wherever they had been driven. If he had been influenced solely by desire for gain, he would probably have taken the former course, since with the whole country alarmed against him his chances of profitably stirring up civil war in it were slender. But rage against Darrell was now his dominant motive. He killed the lamed cow and a dozen of the pigs, converted their flesh into biltong, an easily portable form of food that will keep for an indefinite time, by cutting it into strips and drying it over a fire till it was as juiceless and as hard as leather. This gave him enough food to last a week, and when all was ready he led his men in the direction in which the cattle had been taken.

The tracks he followed led him always uphill till they wound in and out of the bases of naked limestone hills along a path so narrow that his party had to go in single file, and so steep and rugged that it was

difficult for each man to keep in touch with the man ahead. It was dangerous country to invade, for the terrain was admirably adapted for the laying of ambushes. In fact, its suitability for defence against invasion had, before the days of Darrell's rule, saved its inhabitants, the Akapolo, from extermination by Wanazoa raiders. Demetrious was no fool. He knew the risks he ran in penetrating it. But the proverb about the cowardice of bullies is more comforting than true. Though his men murmured, he led them resolutely on.

For five days Demetrious engaged in a form of cat-and-mouse warfare, if such can be imagined, in which the odds are all in favour of the mice. He frequently heard his enemies, but seldom saw them, and never had the satisfaction of firing so much as a single shot. But whenever he passed through a gorge between precipitous hills, great boulders rolled down, breaking the limbs of his men and frightening even more men than they hurt. Fear was the enemy's chief weapon, for Demetrious's men, though they would have delighted to surround a kraal at night, set fire to the thatch and fire on the terrified inhabitants as they fled, had no heart for this kind of warfare. Each morning when he called the roll Demetrious found that there had been desertions during the previous night. At the end of the five days he had lost six men, killed or maimed, from falling boulders, and thirteen men by desertion; moreover, his food supplies were running low again.

For a long time it was a mystery to Demetrious that though on many occasions he saw from a hill-top cattle grazing in an adjoining valley, they always disappeared before he could reach them. But once he got sufficiently close to a herd to see the herdsmen drive it into a cave. Leaving a party of his men to guard his rear, he advanced into the cave only to find it empty. It had as many outlets as an octopus has tentacles, through one of which, as he supposed, the cattle had been driven to another grazing ground. This idea was confirmed when he examined other caves. He found that most of the hills were honeycombed with underground passages, dimly but sufficiently lit by daylight that filtered through crevices overhead. On the sixth day his luck seemed to change. Skirting cautiously round the side of a hill, he came in sight of a herd of cattle grazing not a quarter of a mile away. He halted the men in the lead of his party till all had come up, then advanced at the run. As he

approached, the herdsmen set up a shout, collected the herd and drove it towards the mouth of a near-by cave. Demetrious and his men gained on the cattle so rapidly that when the last of the beasts entered the cave he was less than fifty yards behind it. Without stopping to detail a guard for his rear, he followed into the cave, but the moment after the last of his men entered it an avalanche of stones and tree-trunks fell with a roar, blocking its mouth. A minute later he saw the herdsmen escape by another outlet. Then that, too, was blocked with falling stones. The herd had been a bait for the trap into which he had fallen.

It was Rock, the missionary, who, remembering what he had read about guerilla warfare in the Balkans, had hit on the idea of anchoring tree-trunks to the slope of a hill with greenhide ropes and piling stones against them in such a manner that when the ropes were cut the logs and stones would crash down in the valley below. But it was Donald, the trader, who hit on the idea of using the device to close the mouth of the trap they baited. Now that Demetrious was caught, the question of what was to be done with him arose. The five whites, Peter, Winifred, the two missionaries and the trader, sat at the mouth of the cave that had been their last camping-place—never for two nights in succession had they slept in the same place since Demetrious's advance into the hills—and debated the matter.

"The thing to do now," said Darrell, "is to open the mouth of the cave just enough for one man to come out at a time, surrendering his rifle as he comes. When I have disarmed them, I can send a party of spearmen to see them out of the country. I don't think they will come back. But I can't feel so sure that Demetrious will not come back, and next time it will be more difficult to catch him. I can't keep him a prisoner indefinitely. The only alternative I can see is to shoot him out of hand."

"Wi'out a jury to try him," said Donald, "that would be illegal."

"So would keeping him a prisoner be illegal. Besides, I know nothing against him except what he has told me with his own mouth. I'm booked for Bow Street whatever happens. I realise now what Sir Humphrey Stark meant when he said that the course I had chosen would lead to glory or the gallows."

"I feel bound to remind you," said Rock, "that you yourself have done nothing illegal as yet. It was the Wanazoa and the

Akapolo who between them waged war on this Demetrious. All you did was to advise them. If you let Demetrious go, no one can bring any charge against you."

"And if I let him go I shall have on my conscience all the men whom in the future he may carry into slavery, all the homes he may wreck, all the hate against the white

over, now that he had triumphed, excitement no longer steeled his courage. Reaction had set in. He felt very weary, very unhappy, painfully anxious to shirk the responsibility that Fate had thrust on him. Presently he sighed, rose and beckoned the missionary to follow him.

"I am going to shoot him," he said, when



races of which he will be the cause. On the one side there are my own safety and my wife's happiness to consider; on the other hand, the welfare of who knows how many defenceless people. Which ought to tip the balance? What do you think, Winifred? What ought I to do?"

"I don't want you to do what you think safest, Peter," said Winifred slowly. "I want you to do what you think right."

Darrell hesitated. Now that the fight was

they were out of hearing of the others. "I asked you to come with me because—well—you might say a few words to prepare him."

On their way to the mouth of the cave they met Faku, the Akapolo chief, followed by a dozen men carrying pots on their heads. Faku had bitterly resented the carrying of war into his country, for the Wanazoa herds had eaten grass needed by the cattle belonging to his own tribe.

"Baba," said the old chief. "The mlandu

is finished. I have brought these for proof." He took the pot from the man behind him and held up by the hair the severed head of Demetrious. "The other heads are in the other pots. There are twenty and nine all told."

furniture as a belated wedding present. Lady Stark won't have any further use for it, as we go home for good in a month's time."

Darrell, depressed and miserable, expressed his thanks as cordially as he could, and asked Sir Humphrey who was to succeed him in the Commissionership.



On the day after Darrell's return to his ruined boma the Lady of the Lake arrived there, bringing the Commissioner and towing barges full of now unwanted Riflemen.

"Your home seems pretty well gutted," said Sir Humphrey. "Never mind. You can build again, and I'll give you my own

"You are," said Sir Humphrey. "The Colonial Secretary has discovered that you are not, as was at first supposed, a head-strong, self-opinionated youngster who prefers running his own show to obeying orders, but a vigorous and resolute official who can be trusted to deal with an emergency without

the delay of a reference to headquarters. I know you don't want to leave your Wanazoa pals, but there is no reason why you should not make this end of the lake the headquarters of the Administration instead of Kilibula."

Darrell's heart sank. He still believed that he had brought himself within reach of the law by waging unauthorised war on a British subject, forfeiting his right to be retained in Government service and making it impossible for him to receive the amazing and unexpected promotion offered him. He told Sir Humphrey of Demetrious's fate, and added, "I can't shelter behind Faku and Matipa, because, though it was their tribesmen who did what you may call the actual fighting, it was I who pulled the strings."

"Don't worry your head about that," said Sir Humphrey. "It seems that when you chucked your job you did it only verbally. The Colonial Secretary is prepared to overlook what you said in a moment of justifiable excitement. So you were still a Government servant when you took the field against Demetrious, and as such had full authority to do what you did. In fact, your promotion to Commissioner's rank was gazetted nearly a fortnight ago. One other piece of news I've got for you. By way of solace to your wounded feelings, the Prime Minister has recommended His Majesty, although you are still only a youngster, to confer on you a knighthood of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George."



#### WINTER EVENING IN THE BARN.

A BARN—warmed with the body-heat Of cattle housed from cold and rain—An odour—rising moist and sweet:
The breath of hay crunched fine with grain, And that thing—beautiful and wise,
That looks out from a milch cow's eyes.

The farmer on a low stool bends, His head pressed to a muscled flank, With steady strip and pull he sends A white stream to a foaming bank. A strip—a pull—a strip—a pull—
The sound tells when the pail is full.

A swish of hay—the warm milk flows,
The barn grows dark, the rafters dim—
The farmer—straightening stiffly—goes,
A sleek cat following after him.
And on the straw—their lumped knees bent—
The grave-eyed cows lie down content.



## THE KITTEN

- By ERNEST GOODWIN @

If ever you should drop in to witness and listen to either of those two popular light operas, "The Porcelain Prince," or "Jeannette," during their occasional London revival or their provincial tours, you will have the pleasure of hearing Mr. Slingsby Kilton singing the male leading-part in each (baritone).

Slingsby Kilton is quite a good singer, very enthusiastic about his art, and with a naturally pleasing voice. He is not, however, what you might call a once-in-a-century phenomenon. People have been heard to express surprise at the solid and permanent nature of his grip on those two very showy parts in those justly successful operas, and wonder how Kilton worked it. "Influence" they say—and they say quite rightly.

It was influence. A string was pulled.

It was the Girl Next Door who pulled the string. At the same time, if it hadn't been for Nigger——

The story, in fact, rightly and properly starts with a discussion about Nigger.

"But," remonstrated Kilton, "my cat is not even full grown."

"I don't say that the cat was large, but the savagery——"

"Oh, come!"

"—of its manner, its flaming yellow

"Gleaming, if you like," said Kilton, "gleaming with intelligence."

"Flaming," repeated the young lady firmly. "It's ferocious growls—"

Kilton looked at her pityingly and held his tongue.

"-which exhibited its teeth in a maniac

Kilton began to get hot at the collar—or rather where his collar would have been if he had been given proper time to dress for this interview. As it was he had delayed only to slip his grey flannels over his pyjama legs, a cardigan over the jacket, and hurry downstairs. He thanked his stars that by good luck he had finished shaving when she called.

"' Maniac,' " he repeated. " Excuse me, but I begin to feel sure you are mistaken as to the identity of the cat. My cat is a gentle and refined creature. Its eyes don't flame; they beam, amiably. It does not growl. It purrs, musically, and its manners are as irreproachable as yo-mi-ours."

"It was your cat," persisted the young lady, whose unexpected call at eleven o'clock in the morning had sent Kilton's landlady flying up the stairs for him. "I've often seen it. You have a habit of leaning out of your window and calling it-"

"'Nigger,' " said Kilton.

"Some such name—at twelve o'clock at

night, and later."

"Its bedtime," explained Kilton. "I train my cat to go to bed at decent

"You beat a spoon on a plate to make it

come off the roof."

"Well, admitting all that," replied Kilton, stubbornly, "I still protest against the unfair description. 'Savagery,' 'maniac,' really---"

"And when," continued the young lady coldly, "the animal comes flying through the window on to one's pillow, at one o'clock in the morning, with flaring eyes-"

"I say," interrupted Kilton, "did she really? I'm sorry. I apologise. I'll stop her. I'll chastise her-"

" Oh no!"

"Yes, I'll take the hide off her. I hope she didn't startle you. She meant to be friendly, I'm sure." He looked her over. "Yes," he repeated, "I'm sure she only wanted to be friendly."

He spoke very earnestly indeed. She lifted her chin a little, and a faint added flush of colour appeared in her cheeks. Kilton's desire to apologise was becoming

"I do hope you won't allow yourself to fret over the untoward incident." (He felt he was doing things handsomely. "Untoward incident." Very neat. Wasn't she wonderful?) "I will take every possible

step," he went on, warmly, "to see that you are not annoyed again."

"Oh, it wasn't me," said the young

lady.

" Not ? "

"No. It was my-Mrs. Wycherleymy employer."

"Oh!" said Kilton.

He eyed her coldly. "Is that the person with the mauve cap I catch sight of at the ground-floor window next door at odd times, may I ask?"

"Possibly. Probably."

"And it was her window the cat got through—on to her pillow?"

"Yes."

"Not yours?"

" No."

"And she sent you—d'you mean to tell me that you allow yourself to be sent round here at this time in the morning——"

The young lady flushed.

"It has gone eleven," she said acidly. "I apologise if I have unfortunately disturbed your slumbers unusually early. And as to allowing myself to be sent, I am discharging a very reasonable duty towards

my employer."

"I beg your pardon," said Kilton. "If I speak in heat it is not so much because of my own feelings as of the reputation of my cat, who I may say is quite alone in the world if it were not for me. So"—he paused and looked severely at her-" I may take it that the terms of opprobrium you have used so freely are not your own imaginings but those of the person in the violet headgear?"

"I am following Mrs. Wycherley's

description, naturally."

"A prejudiced person," put in Kilton.
"Possibly. Still, as I say, when a cat comes flying through your window at one

"Come now," said Kilton, who thought the trouble had gone far enough. "You know my cat, Miss-I didn't quite catch—\_\_\_\_? "

He hoped she would give him her name. He wanted to know her name. She was the sort of girl whose name you wanted to

"Mrs. Wycherley's companion," she gave

him promptly and finally.

"Quite so," said the baffled Kilton. "Er—quite so. Well, you know my 'Nigger,' and I put it to you, if a wellmannered, well-bred, handsome cat, like mine, should come gliding on to your pillow,

would you—come now, as man to—as one reasonable person to another——"

"I am not prepared to follow you there," said the young lady, who was getting restive. "I can only tell you that if this savage animal is not kept under proper control we shall inform the police——"

"Wow!" said Kilton.

"—and bring an action for damages——"He was speechless.

"-and apply for an injunction directing

you to restrain your cat-"

"This," said Kilton, "is not from you. It is from the person with the purple crest adornment."

"It is a formal intimation from Mrs. Wycherley," said the young lady, and

turned towards the hall door.

They had been talking in the hall. Kilton, who had only one room, on the top floor—a garret, to be quite frank—could not well invite a strange young lady up there to tell him what her visit was about. He wished he could. She grew on his realisation rapidly. He didn't know much about frocks, but hers seemed right. Her hat—that seemed right, too. And her gloves. And the way she stood. And the touch of high colour, and the gloss on her hair, and—Kilton wished the hall had been longer as he followed her. He wished he had got up a bit earlier and had dressed more completely.

He opened the front door for her. She gave him a stiff nod and passed out. He thought of something to detain her just a

moment.

"I say—where are we—just?"

She stopped a few steps down and looked round. She smiled. It was a heartwringing smile, with just a flash of white teeth, and eyes uplifted and turned sideways over her shoulder.

Well, I've given you your warning,"

sne said.

"I know." He tried hard to think of another remark. "That's your room, along the roof, isn't it?"

"Er-yes," she said, the smile dis-

appearing immediately.

"I only meant—that—I've seen you looking out, once or twice when I've been calling Nigger. I hope the spoon and plate don't annoy you."

"Well, you don't want to break the plate,

do you?" She smiled again.

"I'll be much quieter in future," he assured her. "By the way, about this prowling on the roofs. I shall get a bit of

wire netting and put it over my window."

"I'm sorry," she said, "but you see Mrs. Wycherley is such a nervous and touchy old lady, and she dislikes cats, and she isn't at all used to controlling her dislikes——"

"Rather rough on you," ventured Kilton with sympathy, and knew instantly what a mistake he had made.

She froze.

"The only matter I came to discuss with you is your cat. Good morning." She turned and went down the rest of the long flight of front stars.

flight of front steps.

Kilton, properly snubbed, went upstairs and dressed himself abstractedly. So abstractedly that he shaved himself without remembering that he had done so once already that morning.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kilton did not go round to McGrath's that evening as usual. He stayed in his room. It was a bed-sitting-room which he rented, "furnished," for ten shillings a week. He "did" for himself. Funds were short and looked like getting fatally shorter if things went on like this much longer. Already he was cutting rations fine.

His own rations—not Nigger's. Nigger, quite well fed, sat on his lap, purred occasionally and looked up at him. Once or twice he got up and looked out of his attic window. Thirty feet or so away across the irregular roofs was another attic window.

He could recall now that on several occasions when he had been trying to get Nigger back from her wanderings over the roofs at midnight he had seen the reflection of a

light through that window.

He had never troubled to think who the occupant of the neighbouring attic might be. When he leant out, and tapped on a plate with a spoon—a last resource that generally brought Nigger hurrying in from among the chimneys—he had never considered that he might be disturbing the slumbers or otherwise attracting the attention of the girl who had called to see him that morning.

He had owned Nigger for nearly six months. Kilton was a singer, and he had gone round one night to coffee and a pipe with McGrath. McGrath is a painter, who lives at Aldington Studios, number 7. Aldington Studios, the centre of the pain-

ters' colony at Hampstead, which, as is well known, is now the accepted artistic centre of London.

When Kilton entered McGrath's studio he found McGrath consoling Bloomer Tatham. Bloomer Tatham lives at number 4 the Studios. He runs the celebrated banjo band, and being in trouble he had come across to ask McGrath's advice. McGrath asked Kilton's. Bloomer Tatham stated his case again.

"About my cat. There's a penalty under the new Act of Parliament on anyone found harbouring mice. I harbour a lot, have done for years. In fact, such a lot that at times I used to fancy they were harbouring

me. I got a cat."

"Best way," said Kilton.

- "Last night," said Bloomer Tatham bitterly, "my cat presented me with three kittens."
  - "Oh, Heavens!" said Kilton.
- "What's he to do?" asked McGrath.

"Drown 'em," said Kilton.

- "That's what I tell him," said McGrath.
- "Will you do the drowning?" asked Bloomer Tatham.

"No," said Kilton emphatically.

- "Ah!" said Bloomer Tatham sarcastically. It was evident that the point had already been raised with McGrath.
- "I understood," said Kilton, "that you came for advice."

"And now I want practical help."

"What's the hurry?" asked Kilton.
"Last night, you say? Well, who knows what may happen. Kittens have their perils as well as infants. They will probably die if you leave 'em to Nature."

"What of?" asked B. T., brightening.

"Heaps of things. Kids have measles, and whooping-cough——"

"Kittens don't."

"Teething, then—kids die like flies, so I'm told, when they're teething. And look at the teeth the cat tribe develop. Don't tell me that a process of that kind isn't attended with tremendous risks. Leave it to Nature, the Grand Old Mother, and you'll probably find them all dead on your hands one morning."

"Teething isn't as quick as all that,"

said B. T."

"Death is," McGrath assured him.

B. T. went away feeling somewhat better. He looked hopefully at his kittens every morning, but the Fury with the Abhorred Shears that Slits the Thin-Spun Life gave them the go-by. In a month the three kittens and their mother were rollicking madly over each other and the studio floor. Kilton and McGrath used to drop in at nights and look for signs of fatal illness. The teething process went on at top speed. The question of rations loomed ahead. And still Death, long looked for, delayed his stroke. If one of them would only have had the tooth-ache

It was plain that if the kittens were to end as kittens a resort must be made to artificial violence. Nature, very evidently, was leaving the decision in Bloomer Tatham's hands.

B. T., who by training as manager of his banjo band had acquired habits approaching or colourably resembling the business-like, settled his problem by determined action.

One night Kilton was leaving McGrath's. As he opened the dcor to go a figure shot

towards him through the groom.

"That's yours," said B. T. "And that's yours," he added, addressing McGrath, who was seeing Kilton out. He thrust a kitten into the hands of Kilton, another into McGrath's and moved rapidly away.

"Here!" began the other two.

"Keep 'em or' drown 'em," said B. T. desperately. "That still leaves me two cats." He went swiftly back to his studio, sped through his open door and slammed it in their faces as they followed. "It's all right," he assured them through his letterbox. "They're both toms."

The moon moved from behind a cloud. It gleamed on the two kittens. One, Kilton's, was black, the other was an attractive tabby.

"What are we going to do?" asked Kilton.

"I shall drown mine," said McGrath.

"So shall I. Have you got a big sauce pan or a pail?"

McGrath looked down at his kitten and absent-mindedly kissed its delicate and infinitely soft fur. "I vote we take them both along to the pond on the Heath," he said.

Kilton agreed. McGrath was in the dressing-gown he usually wore. He and Kilton each pulled a loose brick out of the pillar of B. T.'s porch and started for the Heath.

Midnight chimed as they went along. A heavenly calm brooded over London's most picturesque suburb, but the night air blew chill. McGrath thoughtfully slipped his kitten inside the breast of his dressing-

gown. Kilton opened his jacket and the black kitten crept affectionately in.

"Hear mine purring?" asked Kilton.

"Mine's positively singing," replied Mc-Grath.

From the fringe of the Heath they walked down to the pond in the Vale of Health. A tall figure appeared. A light flashed at them.

"'Night, officer," said McGrath.

"Just a moment," said the police-constable. "I must ask you what you got there."

The kittens were displayed, and the

"Ah . . . Pretty little things, ain't they?" said the policeman.

"Mine has an intelligent little face,"

agreed Kilton.

"Mine," said McGrath, with a touch of something like enthusiasm, "is just a warm little, soft little bundle of purring fur."

After a minute's silent contemplation, "Wonder if they could do with a drop of milk?" suggested the policeman. "My missis always starts me out with a thermos flask of hot milk when I'm on night dooty. I'm a bit weak on the chest." He was groping among the tails of his tunic. "Here we are." He unscrewed the lid. McGrath cupped his hand. So did Kilton. The policeman poured a little milk into each. The kittens lapped delicately and with appreciation. The three men stood and watched them in tense silence.

"Little beggar," murmured Kilton to

"Well, good night, gentlemen," said the officer, and moved off. . . "Seems a shame, don't it?" came faintly over his shoulder.

"Come on, and let's get it over," said Kilton.

They stood by the brink of the pond and looked into the black water. Unhurriedly, Kilton tied his kitten to his brick with his handkerchief, envying the stoic calm with which he noted McGrath was carrying out the same preliminary. McGrath, fastening his knot with fingers that trembled, hated Kilton for his unconcern. McGrath was a V.C. Kilton had won the D.S.O. twice.

They looked at each other. "Chuck

yours in," said Kilton.

"What for?" demanded McGrath

sourly. "Yours first."

"Why?" demanded Kilton.

"Well, yours isn't worth keeping a second longer than is necessary."

"This kitten," said Kilton acidly, "is a great deal more attractive than yours. Or you," he added as an afterthought. . . .

Ten minutes later they parted at the end of Willow Walk, each with a coldness, a

cold, and a kitten.

Thus Kilton had become possessed of "Nigger." She was a lady—she was shiny black, elegant, yellow-eyed, pinktongued, playful and affectionate.

She flourished exceedingly. She slept not on, but in, Kilton's bed. Part of her nights she devoted to exercise on the roof.

Kilton's room was in an old house, one of a block of five red-roofed Early Georgian houses in Hampstead.

The roofs of these houses were a delight to Nigger, who early found out that to step gingerly out of Kilton's attic window was

to enter a cat's paradise.

There were angles, gables, slopes, odd bits of ramshackle roofs, buttresses and chimney-stacks ancient and modern, balconies, outside lifts, outside fire-ladders, with creepers tasselled here and there, up walls, along eaves, bridged between balconies, such a bewilderment of nooks and crevices and coigns of vantage, with unexpected means of access, that the house-tops seemed joining in a crazy lark with Nigger. The most domesticated cat would have been tempted to explore, and, once venturing, to persist in nightly wanderings.

But the visit from the young lady next door put a stop to that sort of thing. Kilton got some wire netting and pinned it over the opening of his window. Nigger went to jump on to the roof and found herself hung up on the wire. The look she threw at Kilton over her shoulder stabbed him to the heart, but he was adamant. For the sake of the girl next door he would sacrifice

even Nigger's little pleasures.

Nearly a month went by, and then McGrath bade him to a dance at his studio, one of those merry affairs that are possible only when everybody who goes has a young heart and nobody has any money. Only, every man had to contrive, somehow, to bring enough to drink, for two, and every girl something to eat, enough for two. A clear floor, a gramophone, and there you

And there was Kilton—and there was she!

She had hit him right over the heart when first he saw her. Now as he caught sight of her he felt that his very life was involved. The dance pretended to have something to do with fancy dress-at any rate, everyone was supposed to do something to liven up his or her garments—anything, so long as it brought in colour. Kilton, who had only one possible pair of trousers left, had sewn a white stripe down each leg, and put on a blue-and-white striped football jersey and a red sash. She had done some-

thing with green stuff and pink stuff twisted and pinned round her, and something spangly was glittering over and through her hair. Kilton knew no more than that, but his eyes followed her in a dazed fashion.

But dizziness and doubt not the wear for that evening. Other men with eyes in their heads were in that studio, Kilton pulled himself together. He had to be up and about, he felt, or he might miss the fleeting opportunity.

He got her to himafter a time. her Maitland was name. They had one dance, and then there was a rest and chance

for a chat.

"Why haven't you been round to see me again?" he demanded.

"See you?" he intended her to do, she lifted her eye-"Whatever brows. We've no for? further complaint to make.'

"I saw to that. I. wired up my window."

" Then obviously there is no further need for me to call."

"Then I'll take the wire down to-night." "If there is any more trouble Mrs. Wycherley will probably call herself."

"Then I won't take the wire down. But, honestly, don't you think you might have looked me up?"

"But why? My good man, you don't expect me to call and chat with a man I don't know, on the strength of previous objectionable conduct on the part of his cat?" He was beginning an explanation when she struck in again. "Get me some lemonade and let's see what it's like out of doors."



"'This is Mr. Kilton,' said the Girl of all Girls. 'Mrs. Wycherley was wondering, Mr. Kilton, whether you would take tea with her?'

it should be. Aldington Studios are built secluded behind some old houses. enjoy in common a strip of lawn. air was wonderfully warm for November, the ground was dry, even though the dew kept them to the path. A young moon was just rising, and the stars were shining. Kilton got a wrap for her and

another fellow's overcoat for himself, and

they strolled up and down.

"I'll tell you why you should have called," said Kilton. "It was your merest duty to say how pleased you are with Nigger.

would feel gratified if you would take tea with her to-morrow afternoon.' 'Delighted. Pray expect me early.' 'I myself shall be out shopping.' 'In that case I'll call the day after.'"



"On the cushion was an elegant and artistically embroidered silk square, and on the square lay—Nigger."

And me. 'On behalf of myself and my employer, Mr. Kilton, I feel it only right to thank you for having spared us any further annoyance.' 'Pray don't mention it.' Only too pleased.' 'Mrs. Wycherlcy

She was laughing, her white teeth showing as he went fooling on. "Do you write?" she asked. "No? What a gift you are wasting. Ah, of course, you sing, don't you? Mr. McGrath told me you had a fine voice."

"I sing when I get the chance," said Kilton, more than a little grimly.

"What a pity you're not on terms with Mrs. Wycherley. She's the widow of Ambrose Wycherley, the man who——"

"The man who brought over those Dalmatian operas, 'The Porcelain Prince,' and——"

"'Jeannette'—yes. She controls them

in a way still."

"My word!" Kilton began to experience a rapid change in his ideas concerning the lady in the purple cap who frowned at him through the window as he passed to his lodging.

"I wish I could manage something for you, but she's a terribly stubborn old lady. She doesn't like you. Nigger did you a bad

turn there."

Kilton refused to talk about himself any more. He demanded an account of herself. She had to work for her living. She had been thrown out of work—clerical—three times in one year, and had taken the post of companion to Mrs. Wycherley. "She's difficult at times, and I should have left her. But she hasn't a friend, and she's miserable, and ill, and I know she would miss me."

"I should think so," murmured Kilton.

When he saw her home it had turned suddenly colder. A keen east wind was blowing up, and the sky was threatening. She let herself in, turning on the doorstep to throw him a last nod, full of brightness, encouragement. Kilton went up to his room in the house next door with a fresh courage in his breast. He sat down before the black grate and began to think—to think—all sorts of things. . . . He remembered looking at Nigger, sleeping on the bed, purring in her sleep.

He started up, shivering. The lamp was drooping. He looked in astonishment out of the window. Everything was deeply covered with snow, deep, fine, drifting. It must have been an arctic fall, for some hours, but now, as by a miracle, the skies were clear, the stars sparkled, a brilliant moon blazed, and over everything terres-

trial lay the purest cloak of snow.

And Nigger was gone. The wire over the window was forced loose in one corner. No footsteps showed in the snow on the roof. Evidently the main fall at least must have taken place after the cat had got out. Well, as she went so no doubt she would return. He got to bed.

Next morning, no Nigger.

Mrs. Wycherley had a terrible night. There had been rumours of a mouse in the house. A daily woman in one of the flats had gone into hysterics over it that morning. (Of course it might have been drink.) And there were seventeen rooms in the house for him to select from. And again, he might even have left the house that morning. If a charlady is afraid of a mouse, what are the feelings of a mouse towards a charlady, with hysterics thrown in? . . . It was all very well, all very plausible, but Mrs. Wycherley, as she lay in her bed in her room on the second story, knew that terror was upon her.

And it happened. Through the darkness and the silence came the sound, the harsh grating (her hearing became abnormally acute) of fur against a wall, the muffled tramp of relentless feet on a carpet, the sinister rustle made by a mouse's head being turned on its horrid neck. Her limbs were fettered by fear, her head was immovable, but her eyeballs could strain. . . .

There it was!

On the hearthrug it showed, where the moonbeams through the open window made a brilliant patch on the hearthrug. Nearly three inches high, when it stood on its hindlegs, with fearsome ears, and a tail full of threat, and eyes that, catching the light, looked hatefully about.

It vanished, without sound or perceptible movement. Simply, it was there—and then it was not there.

Fresh horror. For while it was on the hearthrug it could not be on the bed, but when it was out of sight, why, it might be anywhere.

Whisk! There it was again, in the same spot, staring the same stare. What was it doing, looking at her like that? What fiendish purpose was working to its diabol cal end? Moment by moment the strain grew towards the unbearable.

What was that? Another movement, utterly soundless. Her frantic mind leapt in question and grabbed the answer.

It was a cat.

Not an actual cat, but a cat's shadow. Into the edge of the patch of moonlight on the hearthrug a black shape had come, the silhouette of a cat's head, with pointed ears, a motionless, alert head.

A cat was staring in from the window.

A minute later Lesley Maitland leapt

from her bed in response to the frantic rattle of knuckles on her door. Mrs. Wycherley in a quaint but not otherwise attractive bed-gown of red flannel swept in.

"It's caught! He's caught it! He's got it in his mouth!" came in a choking

gasp.

"What—who?" demanded Lesley, par-

donably puzzled.

"That man Kilton—on the roof next door," answered Mrs. Wycherley, who at the best of times was never quite clean cut in the statements she made.

Lesley Maitland had a head on her that was something more than merely well shaped. When she got down into the bedroom on the second floor she realised that now, here, and to hand, was the chance to do something for Kilton, the man who owned the cat that caught the mouse that lay on the hearthrug that adorned the bedroom that was included in the maisonnette that was ingeniously constructed in the funny old house at Hampstead.

She struck while the iron was hot.

"What a lovely cat!" she said. "And I believe, yes, it's the cat from next door, you know, the one that got on to your pillow some weeks ago."

"I remember," said Mrs. Wycherley.

"Oh, thank heaven it came again!"

"It is a very intelligent cat," continued Lesley. "Its owner struck me as an intelligent young man."

"We must thank him," decided Mrs.

Wycherley.

"You think it necessary?" asked Lesley, beautifully detached in style.

"Certainly I do," said Mrs. Wycherley.

Kilton had had to leave his lodgings early without bothering about Nigger. A card by the first post had asked him to call at his agent's, Jackson's. He had got to know Jackson rather well lately, and Jackson had promised to do his best for him—really do it, not merely promise.

There was a part for him, the card said,

a nautical part.

Ha! A sailor! He saw himself, in the centre of the stage, in a taking uniform glittering with gold braid, giving to the crowded house a rollicking sea-song with a tremendous rolling chorus—a chorus which would be thundered home by a stage crowd of sailor choristers. About fifty. With a catchy dance-step. Ha!

He was asked—when he kept the appointment sharp at ten—to call again at eleven

(sharp). He did so, and waited till one-fifteen, when he was directed to look back at two-thirty (sharp). He treated himself to a meagre lunch, and calling at two-twenty-five, waited till a quarter past four. Then Jackson came in, bustling and busy and friendly, and called him old chap and took him into the inner office. . . .

It wasn't a musical piece at all—it was just a touring drama. It wasn't much of a part—just one of a mutinous crew who get drunk, and are cowed by the hero—a third engineer—who rescues the heroine and drives the crew, rapidly sobered by

fear, back to their posts.

Not much to learn? Learn? Oh no—nothing at all. He wouldn't have to speak—just go on with the others. Stay—there was a bit of a comedy part. One of the mutineers is rather more intoxicated than the others, does a drunken hornpipe, gets kicked off at last by the hero.

"Can you do a hornpipe?" asked

Jackson.

And Kilton admitted that he could not. Well, there was just the other part then.

Kilton got up to go. It was impossible. He could not get down to it. Surely, surely Fate never intended to put this crowning trial on him. And suddenly he

plunged and took the part.

The image of the girl he had danced with last night suddenly stood in the middle of his mental balancings. A new spirit directed him. It became imperative that he should appear before her no longer as an out-of-work. He would be a man-with-a-job.

"Thanks, old chap. I'll take it. When

do we commence?"

"Three weeks' time. Three pounds a

week. Rehearse Monday."

He walked all the way home out of sheer high spirits. His coat was open, he swung along the street he lived in with verve, abandon and éclat. He reached the house next door. The personage in the heliotrope headgear appeared to be nodding to him from the ground-floor window. The street door opened. The girl of his mental occupation appeared on the step, beckoning. He stopped, unbelieving.

"Mr. Kilton," he heard, "would you

come in?"

He went up the steps in three bounds. She closed the door behind him and led him along the hall to the door of the front room. He followed her in.

The room was pleasantly bright and warm, with a fire, none of your gas-stove

glimmers, but a lavish, chuck-the-lot-onand-who-cares-about-the-price-of-coal affair, blazing up the chimney. Kilton's glance travelled from the fire to the couch against the wall.

It was a handsome piece of furniture. On it was bestowed an opulent-looking cushion of unusually large dimensions. On the cushion was an elegant and artistically embroidered silk square, and on the square

lay—Nigger.

Nigger, lazily and luxuriously extended, lifted a languid head and gave one slight indication with her tail that she knew him and regarded him favourably. Her attitude was almost human. She seemed, as it were, to be lounging on one elbow. Before her on the cushion was set a plate of choice Sèvres ware, and on the plate were frag-

◉

ments of what had evidently once been a generous helping of breast of roast chicken. At these fragments Nigger glanced with the boredom of repletion.

Kilton looked about him a trifle be-

wildered.

From a chair in the window the cap nodded to him. A yellow smile wrinkled underneath it.

"This is Mr. Kilton," said the Girl of all Girls. "Mrs. Wycherley was wondering, Mr. Kilton, whether you would take tea with her?"

"Wi-with-Mrs. Wycherley?" said

Kilton.

"And me," said the young lady.

And Kilton, gathering his wits, said with determination that he would, most certainly, with the greatest pleasure.

#### ALL IN A TRICE.

◉

THE purple in a starling's wing
Is a small matter to behold,
Yet Tyre had envied such a thing
For all her colour craft of old.

And it may seem to many a man Wild grasses shaking in a mead Portend no high important plan That he should pay especial heed.

The new moon like a far frail bird Slow-winging through the velvet dark. . . . The minstrelsy dead Shelley heard And made all men to hear, the lark. . . ,

Common they are, such sights, such sounds, Common as stones, or towers, or trees, To load the narrow days and nights Of any mortal with unease.

And yet in such, all suddenly, All in a trice shall Beauty stand Before a man until he see Vast miracle on either hand.

A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.

# KINDRED OF THE . . . ICE . . .

### By H. MORTIMER BATTEN

• ILLUSTRATED BY LEO BATES

⊚ ⊚

LA KEE sat and rested, his hunger appeased—around him the Arctic glare over sea and snow, a glare no white man could have tolerated. The Indian was very thin, and though he had eaten, hunger still gnawed within him. His body ached, his thin, bony hands hung limply from the wrist, for that hunger of his was the long accumulated hunger of many weeks of fasting; yet hope was at his heart, for spring was near, and at his feet lay food sufficient for many days.

Ula Kee had crouched on this icy headland for thirty-six hours ere his kill was made, for being a Barren Lands Indian, he knew little of the ways of the sea-folk. Two days ago he had seen the walruses, old and young, swarming on the point, and very stealthily he had crept up, only to see the great beasts slide into the sea at his approach. So he had built an ice shelter at the end of the headland, and an hour ago he had killed a walrus with his spear.

A strange scene had followed. "Yochyoch-yoch" across the sparkling quietude rang the cries of the dying beast, to wake a thousand echoes from the sea. At least Ula Kee thought they were echoes, but soon he realised that they were the answering calls of the other walruses on every side of him. The green waters had surged and swelled as the bedlam grew, but as the beast at his feet fell silent, the noises slowly ceased. Yet even now the herd was not far off. He had seen several bulls land on the narrow strip between him and the mainland, and had there been any laughter in his soul, Ula Kee would have laughed at their clumsy, impotent fury. He could see them bobbing up and down, up and down in the glare, striking their yellow tusks into the ice, but daring to approach no nearer. So, ignoring them, Ula Kee stirred himself, and began to cut his kill into quarters.

The task of carrying it away would mean many journeys, for he was weak, but piece by piece he would take the meat to the mainland and cache it there under the ice, secure from the wolverines. If the Eskimo did not find him, he would make this his hunting range for so long as the meat lasted—but this was Eskimo land, and Ula Kee was deadly afraid of the Eskimo.

As he worked he scarcely noticed the sudden booming of ice, nor did he pay heed to the fact that the thud of the foolish beasts stabbing with their tusks had ceased, so taking up his first load, he started shoreward, then he stopped, staring incredulously. Either his eyes were deceiving him, or the shore was moving, keeling slowly round before his gaze!

Ula Kee glanced at his own shadow, long and black across the whiteness, and —yes, that too was moving! He threw down his load and began to shuffle across the ice, and there, ahead of him, between him and the land, was—water! The icy headland was now, indeed, a drifting berg, and Ula Kee was drifting with it!

Coolly and unemotionally the Indian took in the situation. He had been trapped, fooled by his own quarry, whose powers he had so sadly underestimated, for he saw now how thin and narrow the interconnecting strip had been. The big bull walruses had cut him adrift, had trapped him as no Eskimo hunter would have allowed himself to be trapped. Ula Kee chuckled grimly, for his brain had been dulled, his powers dimmed by hunger and the long trail, and standing there, stooping, his fingers almost against the snow, he weighed up the conditions of the moment. His mind was a blank save for the moment. for he had dwelt too long by the pathways of hunger to look forward or to look back;

and the laugh which broke from his lips was a mockery of himself, and of admiration for the creatures who had fooled him.



"There, ahead of him, between him and the land, was-water!"

It was a laugh as mirthless as the glaring Arctic sun, which as yet knew no bird's song, no butterflies, while its rays scorched the skin but left the bone cold, thawed the snow but merely glazed the ice.

So Ula Kee watched the mainland drift, and the warmth of life, the love of life was surging back through his veins, for the food he had eaten was beginning to tell. At present his mind worked slowly, one thought at a time, ticking off the minutes steady to the pointer; but soon he would be hungry again, he would eat again, and slowly his brain would clear.

tantly, across an unfathomable distance— Ula Kee cast impotently upon the Arctic seas!

He was adrift in the Arctic. That did

not matter much, for the sea was wide,

That night the Indian again crouched in his shelter, while the floating island revolved and drifted imperceptibly towards the south, and as the moon came up, he beheld a strange spectacle. He could hear the great sea-folk in the water all about him, then flap-flap-flap he heard them land on the icy shelves. He decided not to molest them, for he had learnt their cunning, and he had meat sufficient for several days, and so they came out on the ice all round him,

sniffing suspiciously, peering down with their dim, sea-washed eyes into the gloom where Ula Kee was crouching. Their anger seemed now to have gone, and presently one great bull went up to the mutilated corpse, sniffed it, and uttered a strange mournful cry. At that the others came one by one, gathering in a broken ring, and each in turn sniffed and moaned, till they were all moaning and sniffing, and the night air shook. It was one of the strangest scenes human eyes have ever looked upon—the ring of dark figures against the Arctic sky, moving, shuffling, shifting, moaning, and each as it moaned raised its bearded face towards the moon and lowered it again. The chorus grew as yet others came and gathered round in orderly fashion. The great bulls, whitetusked and grim, the cows, some with their babies on their backs, the younger beasts in the outer circle, and up and down, up and down went their heads, in time with their weird lamentations. A company of mighty mourners, gathered, it would seem, at an established ceremony of their kind, and Ula Kee knew that he might have walked in among them and they would not have harmed him. To-night they were at peace.

When dawn came, the beasts were gone, leaving the island wet and trodden, and Ula Kee buried the remains of his kill, covering it with snow and ice, which he trod well in to hide the scent. Soon the sun warmed him, and the day went by uneventfully, but next night the great seals came again, and now Ula Kee did not hide from them. He sat on a high point watching, for he felt that his face was towards the sunset, and somehow he wished to be admitted to this strange brotherhood, upon whose land the fates had thrust him.

So to-night the walruses gathered round Ula Kee, and he talked to them in his own soft tongue, a sound so strange to them that they listened intently and slowly they drew nearer, till one great bull, the leader of the herd, sniffed the man's outstretched hands, then turned and grunted to the others. One by one, in the order of their standing, they came to sniff the hands of Ula Kee, each moving aside to admit the next, and when the last was past, he rose, and still talking to them he moved amongst them, telling them that his face was towards the sunset, and that he no longer belonged to a race of mighty hunters. It was well that this new brotherhood should exist between them, for never again would he raise his hand against their kind. Soon he might starve upon the ice, yet he would keep the peace with the mighty people of the sea.

Next day the walruses did not leave the island, and on the sunny side lay the mottled babies, flapping their great flappers and uttering strange barking calls when their elders rose to the surface with food for them. So Ula Kee took his place among the young walruses, echoing their cries and smiting the ice with the flat of his hands, and soon a great bull brought a gleaming fish and laid it on the ice beside him. Thus Ula Kee was admitted into his strange company, and now he had no need to touch his own bloody kill, while the fact that he had no fire with which to cook his meal troubled him little. When darkness came. he laid himself down beside one of the great nursing mothers whose coat was dry, and so for the first night for many sleeps Ula Kee slept warmly.

Each day thereafter the great sea-folk fed him and warmed him, and the Indian would sit for hours leaning against a dozing mother, just as they leant against each other; but the season of long days and short nights was at hand, and the Indian on his ever-shrinking island began to feel the glare. He could not get away from that glare. He could not hide his eyes from it, till the red blood seemed to simmer in his brain, and the knowledge came to him that not by hunger nor by thirst was he to die, nor yet by cold, but by the pitiless Arctic glare. He crept from point to point like a stricken dog, shielding his eyes, his crooked fingers clutching at the ice, but it would seem that Fate had yet another card to throw before him. Ula Kee had been a mighty hunter, and was it for him to die impotently upon the seas without a last

fight for the glory of existence?

He had lost count of the days he had spent on the drifting ice field, and it was in the dusk of evening that a strange outcry among his strange people warned him that something unusual was astir. He rose to his feet, and in the water not far off, among the drifting ice cakes, his throbbing eyes made out a dark upheaval—many forms struggling in the water. It was the great bulls of the herd attacking something—a monster fish no doubt, which had first attacked them, for all the cows with their calves were stampeding to the island, and huddling panic-stricken wherever there was shelter for them. Then the thing reared

up from the deep, and Ula Kee, as he beheld it, shuddered and cowered low, for it was a terrible thing, incredibly terrible, the thing of his papoose dreams—a great grey-bearded face with yellow tusks, four of which stuck forward from the lower jaw. It was five times the size of the greatest walrus in the herd, and about its small white eyes the coarse hair clung like seaweed. It had seen Ula Kee, and was coming towards the island, quite heedless of the ferocious stabs of the great bulls, which strove to turn it from the hiding of their young.

So death had come, and to Ula Kee the realisation was but little. In the Wild, death is not the wide-eyed, dreaded spectre that it is to the people of the cities. It comes as the evening breeze comes to bear the pollen from the flowers, as the dawn comes to scatter the dews, as a leaf falls when the gossamers of autumn shine silver in the woods. There is no fear of it, no dread of it, only the primeval, ancient bidding to rise and fight for life while life lasts, and beyond that—Death, which is so much, and yet exactly nothing.

So Ula Kee rose to fight while his life lasted, to cling to life red-fanged, red-clawed, with wiry, virile resistance, till that resistance should cease, and the great mother of all earthborn things should hide his eyes from the glare, and his face from hunger and cold and from the long, long waiting for something better, which is Life.

The red man's spear was in his hand, his parki hood cast back from his forehead where the black hair clustered, his moccasined feet wide braced, and his vision clear at last, while the thing came surging up, plunged, then rose, almost "And so the back hard so the highest hard hard so the highest hard highest hard hard so the highest hard highest hard hard highest highest highest hard highest high

at his feet,

and he felt the very ice quake. With the quickness of a marten, the Indian struck, straight between the gaping jaws, through the matted seaweed beard; between the yellow tusks he struck, lunging headlong across the ice. All his strength was hurled into that deadly thrust, every fibre of his body tensed then relaxed like a coil spring, and as the tip of the spear zipped between

his finger-tips, he felt the hot blood spray across his face, and Ula Kee was on the ice under the very jaws of his mighty foe.

But in an instant the man was up, calling the world-old, savage cry to those who were fighting with him, and ere he could be crushed, he saw the great bulls of his own people leaping and striking at the great black hulk. They sprang from the white-lipped surge, and struck and tore the bristling flesh of the common foe, and even Ula Kee had time to wonder at their weasellike quickness, to love the bravery of these strange folk, whom, till he came to know them, he had regarded as

so much animated blub-

ber.



"And so they came out on the ice all round him, snifting suspiciously."

they saw in him a mighty leader, and with man as their general, the bloody fury of vengeance was with them as his backer. So also Ula Kee felt the surge of brotherhood, and rising, he caught the protruding shaft, hurled his weight upon it, and his moccasined feet struck the bearded chest, as he wrenched and tore to free the point. The spear was in his hands again, and again he stepped

truding, inexorably locked and jammedback, dashing the sweat from his redrimmed eyes, the wet hair from about his he saw the thing fighting, fighting, while brow, and again in the iridescent spray. around it the sea surged with heavy bodies and sabre tusks. Hack, slash, hack he heard the blows go home. He saw the sea tinted crimson, as when the sun sets; he saw the spray rise to the height of a mighty tamarack, he saw a bull walrus hurled clear of the water high above his head, and heard it crash upon the ice behind him. Then he saw the cows leaving their calves and swimming into the water, and he knew that

"Peering down with their dim, sea-washed eyes."

in the glitter of ice and trodden snow, in the glare of the far-flung, floe-laden sea, he struck, he hurled, he threw his weight upon that dagger point. Straight at the small white eye he aimed, and again at the fury of the lunge he fell upon his face, but he felt the spear point crash and penetrate and jam, and he knew that victory was his.

So at length Ula Kee, grotesque, shivering, red-eyed, terrible, a nightmare travesty of a man, crouched on all fours at the water's edge, watching, staring at the scene which belonged to the world-old mystery of the seas, where times change not and where the wonders of the world are but a grain of sand in the passing of the tides—so Ula Kee saw the thing—blinded, choked with its own life-blood, his own spear pro-

victory was for his people, for the monster had turned its great mottled belly uppermost in the surge.

Ula Kee crawled to the height of the island, and there, in the red-lipped glory of the dying day, ere night came and swift on its heels the dawn, which with its birth bore no hope of survival—there Ula Kee told his strange people of the greatness of their victory, while "yoch-yoch-yoch" their fierce but triumphant voices rang as they gathered round—"yoch-yoch-yoch," peering up into his face, while in the ghostly light, amidst sky and sea, and ever beyond the silence of the Great Unknown, Ula Kee stood proudly amongst them, unarmed, alone, yet glorious in the dusk of triumph.

Four months later a young brave addressed his people in the heart of the Barren Lands. "Of Point of a Spear," said he, "we have no news, but this we cannot doubt, that he has perished in the Barren Lands whence the caribou wander in the fall. Think kindly of him, my people, for he was a brave man and a great hunter. Of La Kee Too we have no news. His face was towards the north, and I believe that some day he will return, and therefore we must leave for him such signs as he can follow. As for Ula Kee, he travelled towards the sunset and to the land of the Eskimo, but not knowing the ways of the sea he drifted with the ice, and for many sleeps was alone with the ice. Such friendships he made as his people know not, and many strange things he saw, about which some day, when he is old,

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he will tell the children of the teepees. So he found at length an island, upon which white men had once lived, for there were many sturdy huts, their roofs still sound, huts sufficient to shelter our entire tribe. In the grassy bays there were deer in plenty, the creeks were heavy with white-fish, and mink and marten were everywhere along the timbered slopes. So when the tides were right, Ula Kee built a raft, and returned to the mainland with good news for his people of this new hunting range, where he will lead them."

And thus Ula Kee stood proudly by the fire of his own race, around them the great grey loneliness, and there was a strange wonder at his soul as he heard again the cheering of his people.

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#### THERE'S ALWAYS SUMMER FOR EVERY COMER.

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WHEN old grey London looked through my window, "Come out for a walk," said he.

There was no green grass for a carpet spread

And oh, never a golden tree.

- "This is no place for a man to walk in, So I'll not come out," said I.
- "I've a sapphire roof for your head," he sang,
- "And the little white clouds go by."

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"And there's always Summer for every comer. You'd better come out," said he.
So old grey London, I took his hand,
And we walked for a mile to see.

And there in an arch by a paved street corner A little old woman sat.

She wore a shawl that was dingy with years.

And a thing that was once a hat.

In an old brown basket she had were roses Dimpled, and dewy and sweet. "There is a patch of Summer," said London, "That is shining about your feet,

"And this is one of my toiling children; The Winter is in her face, But she has brought sweetness of sunlit gardens To this Summer-less shadowed place."

MARJORIE WILSON.

# HENRY BILTNER'S • WOOING •

## By FREDERICK WATSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

ENRY BILTNER was a real millionaire, by which is meant an American millionaire. There are Scotsmen or even Englishmen who are worth a million, according to their next-of-kin and the death duties, but for the real accredited millionaire the United States have the goods. Henry followed the great tradition. To be a proper millionaire means a single mind constantly worked up about a dollar. Mind you, the pursuit of money is unworthy-great writers are quite friendly on the point—but Henry had never read writers, either great or merely known, so he didn't care a doughnut. There are big novelists who say it is sheer cruelty for them to turn off more than one page a day. Henry wouldn't have lost weight if they had shut down and taken to something useful, like bootlegging.

From his earliest days, Henry acted up to the best principles. He risked his all and took back quite a number of other people's in return. Markets rose as Henry came on the flags and stocks seemed to sicken when he went off for a hair-cut. It has always been said that you only require to set your heart on anything to pocket it. All the most distinguished members of the buccaneering calling say so. Henry satisfied the book. Any man from the Middle West who cracks his eggs on his dictaphone is not waiting for business. He is only wondering which telephone call he'll take first.

Henry woke up at forty-five to find himself not merely a millionaire, but a bachelor. With his splendid mental equipoise he knew that he must move some. He accordingly moved some to Europe. Only die-hard American millionaires cling to the homespun idea of married bliss.

Henry ran into Lady Verity and her daughter Anne as naturally as possible. He was motoring to Bath (which he had heard was an antique, though not on the

market except in lots) when round a sharp corner he met Anne. It was a tremendous smash. Henry in a final swerve to avoid her climbed the bank, which, being precipitous, emptied him out. When he began to take notice again, he was in bed in Corbals Court, where the Veritys had kept life at a distance for about ten centuries.

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It would be impossible, except in a prolonged and arduous work of psychological supererogation to reproduce the astonishing influence that Corbals made on Henry. It would seem too like a surreptitious onslaught on the infinite inadequacy of a millionaire's resources. It would sound like a cynical exposure of the things we worship. But for a time Henry took no notice of Corbals at all. He only grew aware of his nurse. All serious illness comes back to the nurses. It is they who soothe the restless sufferer by remorseless reminiscences of patients who were snuffed out like candles. It is their steady ardent chatter by night and by day that has given the convalescent the odium of bad temper and even discourtesy. There was the day nurse, a fat woman of irrepressible high spirits and a splitting laugh, who kept his head in a hum all day. By night she was succeeded by one of those dark, formidable women who care only about really critical cases. Henry felt there was some consolation in her obvious languor about his condition, but at the same time it made him rather uncomfortable to fall into an infant slumber with all that experience around the pillow.

Simple persons imagine because a patient is too ill to see anyone that he is indifferent to this vale of tears. Far from it. The chief occupation of a professional nurse in a private house is to keep the patient in touch with things.

"It's a pity, isn't it?" remarked the day nurse, bumping against the end of the

bed for the fourth successive time. "It's a shame to see old families on the rocks. And what a sweet young lady that Miss Anne is. Beautiful, I call her. There was a star on the pictures, I remember. Just like her. What was her name, now?" She tapped on the end of the bed with a spoon. No, she couldn't remember. Something like Musquash. A foreign sound. But there, what did it matter?

"You mean they'll have to leave this house?" inquired Henry.

"As sure as sure. Unless . . ."
Henry stared at her with mild interest.
"Unless Miss Anne marries money."

Henry brooded over those words. During the stages of convalescence, when it is almost unsafe to refuse the merest whim of an invalid, Henry made a study of Anne Verity. He played cards with her, listened to her reading, tried to believe he was simply a whale at wishing she would play her fiddle, and in the later weeks he took lessons in fishing on the quiet and shady banks of the river. But all the time he was making up his mind. It must be admitted he received encouragement. The friendliness of Anne rather surprised him. He had expected somehow she would be different. Not that he professed to know anything about women. But he had heard a rumour somewhere, probably a stranger talking to another stranger in a Pullman on the 'Frisco railroad, that women make a point of showing how much they dislike a man at the very time when he need hardly worry to propose. would have preferred that Anne was less confiding and straightforward and childish. The way she spoke of a friend of hers—a boy at school, or it might be college—called Rupert, was rather tedious. But Henry sprang to that. He was not stupid—only inexperienced. He did not forget that guy in the Pullman had mentioned women found it amusing to make a man jealous.

Nothing so far has been said about Anne's mother. It hardly seemed worth while. Henry knew Anne must have a mother somewhere, and hoped during those early weeks that the old lady would come and knit beside his chair when Anne was off duty. But the old lady never came. She was, as a matter of fact, away, trying to raise a loan. She was turning the heads of bank managers, trustees, gnarled family solicitors and other lamentable people. But times were bad, so Mildred Verity returned.

It was a very memorable evening for

Henry. All day he had held a business conference with himself. He had put his cards on the table. He had spent a precious commercial week crossing the Atlantic just to get married, having a profound veneration for the English tradition and the English country house. Finally, he considered he would be a proud man to land in the States with Anne. He would, he felt sure, make her very happy. With this settlement Henry limped to his chair in the garden, and memorised a few crisp sentences in which the resolution would be put to the meeting and passed unanimously.

The little interlude passed off extremely smoothly. There was not a hitch. Anne, instead of reading the latest market quotations, which she knew were all the modern English fiction Henry's soul required, sat for a moment twiddling her fingers and just looking up at Henry and then looking down at Christopher, the cat, who does not figure otherwise in this personal chronicle. Henry knew there was a crisis looming along. almost looked as though Anne had sickened of waiting and was going to propose to him. But she wasn't. Instead she treated Henry like her grandfather and said she was just engaged to Rupert, and would Henry break the news to her mother, because Rupert, though certain to get his Pass degree in botany, had no prospects, speaking in crude cash.

#### II.

Henry wired for a complete cocktail outfit and recovered his spiritual stability with the aid of successive doses of his hypophosphate tonic and dry Martinis. What's more, he behaved very well. He had a conference with Rupert and felt sure Anne's mother was right. Rupert would not have won the confidence of a canary. Apart from his adoration for Anne, he had no brain-waves in cold storage. Thinking it over, Henry felt rather relieved. If Anne saw the meaning of life in Rupert, what kind of market could she ever have seen in him? The girl was evidently very simple—too simple by half. Restored to self-esteem, Henry set out to find Lady Verity, who had, he was told, returned, and might be discovered in the melancholy wreckage of the Italian garden.

He saw her in the distance, standing in close conversation with a resplendent figure in a check riding-suit, brown top-boots, a squash hat and a fierce intolerant moustache thrusting into the world from an imperial face. Henry never understood what built up the British Empire until he saw Colonel Vavasour leaning over the small and girlish Lady Verity. He was only possible in the surroundings. Like rare and unbelievable carnivora, he roamed in exclusive hunting counties, in select regimental rooms, in ancient fastnesses and at the Grand National. Mildred Verity turned as Henry came along, and after a brief conversational encounter in which he was evidently ruminating on the niche Henry could fill in his hazardous campaign with necessity, the Colonel gave him a lingering proprietary look and departed.

But Henry had forgotten him. Mildred Verity was rather younger-looking than her daughter, and far more attractive. of those women of thirty-eight who haven't yielded an inch. All round Henry were those battered crumbling ramparts from which the only distinguished Verity had watched a Roundhead load up a cannon with boulders, potatoes, the rector's cat and a bucket of powder and, with an agonised smile, had been no more. All round was the venerable turf about which so much fine stuff is written, the ancient elms, sycamores, yews and other trees if you know them. There was the fountain long since fallen amongst the goldfish who ages ago had been eaten by the last heron of the Corbals heronry. Everywhere the enduring patient quiet of an old garden and an old house.

Henry spoke of Rupert. He flattered himself he made the most of Rupert, for Anne's sake as well as his own. After all, Anne had preferred that invertebrate student of delicate textures in lounge suitings to a man who was worth a million. She wanted to drink her life from Dresden china. How different was her mother! The more Henry stuck up for Rupert, the more he came to the conclusion that it would be a proud moment for him when he handed Mildred Biltner off the gangway at New York. But this time he would not leave anything to chance. He would see just where he was and corner the market.

Anne's mother had a low caressing voice. She said facts so gently they had the note of fairy-tales. She had always given the impression that she needed protection from the rude blasts of this hard life. She was, Henry knew, the kind of woman who had always waited somewhere in the attic of his soul.

"Rupert is a nice boy," said Mildred Verity in her far-off voice, "but he is a catastrophe. He is one of the Rentouls of Rigg. They have," she added dreamily, plucking a pink and gently tearing it to fragments, "blued everything. They haven't a bean. Isn't it a pity? Such a nice boy when you get past his stammer, but I often think that's a compensation, as he hasn't anything to say."

Henry, lulled by her charming monotone, only nodded. He asked nothing more than to listen to her for ever, as one hears at a great distance the melodious murmur of

running water.

"It is of course quite impossible. Anne likes a disappointment. She was never so lovely as when she broke off her engagement to Clarence Swann. They added the second 'n' when they inherited Poodledyke Place. But to return to Rupert and Anne. They have no money. And I have no money. Living without money is just bearable without Rupert. With Rupert one would lose poise, and become sordid. In fact, I'd probably shove him in the pond."

Henry wilted a little at this practical project, but Mildred Verity seemed once more

to belong to the ages.

"This place," she said, "is up for sale. If anyone takes it we shall have to do something about it."

"About what?"

"About everything."

"Don't think I'm poking my nose into your affairs, but Colonel Vavasour—would he not . . .?"

She laughed. She gave a sudden hearty, unexpected laugh. She went on laughing more and more. It almost seemed like a complaint. Then she eased down, and gave Henry a congratulatory look. But she never troubled to give an answer to a question which was so obviously a flight of humour.

A little bewildered, Henry rose. "I suppose it is in the hands of agents?" he asked, hoping his voice sounded off-hand and as casual as a passenger in an elevator.

"Oh yes. They are called Rapport and Clavering. They have had it since my grandfather's days. People come every year or two and scramble about in the shrubberies. Anne and I usually share their luncheon baskets. We have used the Colonel occasionally, to make them think there is a rush on. He arrives in the village car. But we never hear from them again. They depart, leaving their empty bottles, never to return."

"I am sorry I too must depart. I have a little business in town," said Henry with a

studiously innocent air.

III.

THERE is a note about the best English estate agent that was new to Henry. had never experienced atmosphere in housing. When he had taken his country place on the Hudson River, he had done so without any particular sense of the poetry in commerce. He had not gone an extra thousand dollars because the Iroquois had paddled that way quite a time before. But he saw at once the British understand these things better. They are slow but deep. They don't live so much in the past as on it. Henry did not of course know anything about Rapport and Clavering. He did not know that they had sold houses (which are always called "properties") for so many years that they were regarded as estate agents no longer but rather as a social centre where the best people came in to deplore Bolshevism.

Henry crossed the threshold of Rapport and Clavering, and found himself terribly alone in an immense room and surrounded at inaccessible distances by immaculate gentlemen seated at small aloof tables. All these gentlemen were irreproachable in attire and deportment. They wore short black coats with exclusive club ties, or if more mature, what are called morning coats with striped trouserings and more elaborate collars.

Henry, walking smartly, reached the nearest one as a clock like a cathedral chime began the last quarter. As it was not possible or decent to speak just then, all the gentlemen consulted their watches to make sure the chimes were not premature.

"I wired you," began Henry with the snappy velocity of an explorer amidst an unknown tribe.

"Wired me?" repeated the young man, with signs of distress.

"About a house."

The young man relaxed. "Town or country property?"

"Country."

"The Tudor Banqueting Hall," said the

young man.

Henry moved away. He went as noiselessly as he knew how. He reached an immense carved door. Opening it, he entered the country department.

Now Rapport and Clavering had a very delicate sense of the psychological distinction between town and country. Henry could not have elaborated the difference, but he was alive to it. He began to understand what a lot the States have to learn in the unobtrusion of business in business, or the

cleavage of commerce from commerce. Rapport and Clavering had with piercing insight grasped the profound importance of the sympathetic law of association. Town amongst the best people meant certain standards of reticence in clothing and speech, and an air of fatigue very natural during the season. Voices were accordingly muted, lights were restrained and the intense but refined atmosphere of an Anglo-Catholic tea-party achieved.

How instantly divergent was the hall of audience for the country! Rapport and Clavering had devoted decades of study to country types and country manners, not simply in general (which even Smollett and Byebillows pull off fairly well) but in counties. In this way a client is sized up almost at once. He enters with the authentic heartiness of the countryman in town, or the desperate heartiness of the townsman heading for the country. He wants to sell a

house or buy a house.

At each little table sits a young gentleman chosen with exquisite care to deal with such phenomena. They are one and all trained to an aspirate. Instead of the somewhat depressing attire of their colleagues in the adjoining room they are encouraged to wear garments of a more pronounced tweed or check and ties so like Old Etonians or Harrovians or Dartmorians that they are practically the same. Such things make a difference. They may seem insignificant, but they count. Henry began to realise that business is so keen in the States because it depends on the goods, and not on the goodwill.

Rapport and Clavering prided themselves upon having studied every possible client desirous of a country property and by putting him quite at his ease carry through business without any of those crude backfires which, it is notorious, revolt and distress the cream of the nobility and gentry. If one of those obvious retired Colonels from the best county should come thrusting in, then Mr. Joliffe (who had attended Meets at the firm's expense) greets the old boy as though he had just been dragged out of his top-boots. If a Highland laird comes in, then Mr. Mac-Gregor descends on him quite like a breath from the North.

But it was quite different with Henry. The very spectacle of him in his American clothes sent a shudder right through the place. He was nothing short of a challenge. Josiah Clavering was consulted by local telephone.

"I think, sir," came the confidential voice, "he is a genuine American."

Josiah stared hard at nothing at all. He felt rather badly—Getting behind the times, losing touch with progress. He had never admitted the existence of Americans. His fine imagination smouldered. A room for Babbitts. With a bison head and a picture of Sitting Bull. A bright snappy room, with a cabinet for cocktails. A real young Bostonian with tortoise-shell spectacles, a spittoon and a belt.

"Have we anyone who's been to New York or their other townships?" asked Josiah with splendid renascence.

"Oh no, sir."

"Have any of our young men ever read O. Henry?"

"Oh who, sir?"

"Please be calm, Mr. Drench. I shall be obliged if you will ask Mr. Courtenay, who is not unlike a Red Indian, if he will assume the proper air of sharp practice, and remember the honourable history of the company."

Mr. Courtenay found Henry rather morose. He said he wanted to buy Corbals Court and stared far away.

"By all means," said Mr. Courtenay.

"Just make out the contract," added

Henry with finality.

In a mental abstraction Mr. Courtenay took down the Domesday Book of country properties for disposal, and with anxious

properties for disposal, and with anxious gaze looked up the C's. It was there. With a heart full of prayer and devotion he turned it up. It was without question for sale. It had been for sale for decades.

"The historical associations," chanted Mr. Courtenay, "are interesting. Anne

Boleyn . . ."

"Cut that out," said Henry. "Let's get down to what matters. All you need do is to say that the house is purchased. But don't tell your client by whom. Get me?"

"Yep!" said Mr. Courtenay involun-

tarily.

Henry left Rapport and Clavering the owner of Corbals Court. There was nothing left now except to fix it up with Mildred.

#### IV.

HENRY thought it would be nice to get down two days later when the great news was settled up, and, upon a summer evening in the pensive wreckage of the Italian garden, he could explain that he hungered for nothing more than just to go on staring at some goldfish with Mildred by his side. That was the way to manage things. It

made him smile to think how he had bungled with Anne. Love was an art. Played properly it was the simplest thing in creation. Heartened by everything going along so smoothly, Henry purchased an engagement ring and set off. He also chartered, being a man who had conquered all the moves of this complicated game, a hamper for the refreshment which all big emotional scenes demand. It contained everything from crab to champagne and soles to strawberries. It was Neronian. Beside that fishpond, with nightingales singing all over those crumbling ruins where Anne Boleyn had wished dear Henry was not so impulsive, the scene was sure to be terrific.

He was very careful to draw up the car without a sound so that Mildred would be taken by surprise. He had gone over the whole thing just as clearly as could be. Mildred would be alone, utterly overcome by the fact that the old home was gone. He decided he would ask her to come to America, and then, when she had accepted, he would say, quite off-hand, "Or just stay here all the while?" Whether a nightingale struck up then or not, the moment was undoubtedly explosive.

The house was very quiet as Henry entered the dark hall. There was no sign of Mildred. He decided to take her by surprise. He would give her a little shock. He would, in fact, hide. Accordingly Henry hid. The hall grew darker. The bells rang out for Evensong. He became rather stiff.

There was afar off the sound of a motor. Voices. Footsteps. The sad, reluctant music of the bell echoing and re-echoing until it joined the encompassing silence of the place. Afar off came the shuffling, distracted feet of Mrs. Angel, the permanent staff of Corbals Court. She handled any visitors. She had shown them over the place since she was a child in the reign of good Queen Victoria. She had lost all sense of curiosity in arrivals and departures.

Henry, concealed behind the clock, found the immediate prospect a little disturbing. To stand behind a clock may, on occasions, be the most laughable thing in the world, but to a stranger with a permit to view it is often a cause of misunderstanding and annoyance. One doesn't meet people behind clocks. But what gave Henry an even greater sense of perplexity was that the voice of the lady on the threshold was oddly familiar. Things were happening as they do in dreams. Where had he heard that

quiet, smooth inflection before? An English person would have said "American," just as one says intelligently "giraffe" at the Zoo. Henry muttered "from the old

"I just wondered whether I might look over."

"You might have done, Mum, and welcome, but I has my instructions. Her



place down south," because he was Virginian bred.

"I'm sorry, madam," Mrs. Angel was saying, "I'm sorry, Mum, but the Hall is taken."

ladyship came to me an hour since. 'It's sold,' she says. 'Mary—it's sold, and thank goodness!' 'And what will your ladyship do?' I asks. 'Do?' she says with a laugh. 'Do?' Why, I'm just married to Colonel

Vavasour, and going abroad this very day.' What's up with that there clock?"

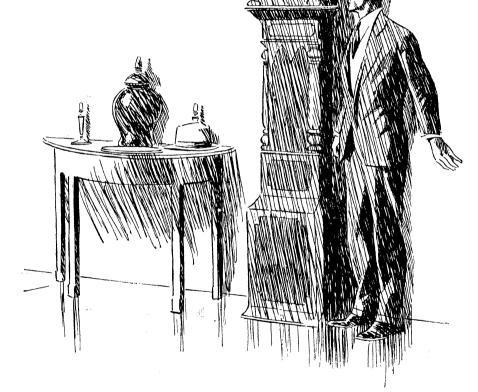
By a supreme effort Henry regained his clutch on life. Mildred married. Anne

sob-stuff if you like. Henry struggled hard to keep cool and sensible. He remembered how often he had nearly proposed. That long-ago feeling is the dickens.

Virginia in the summer-time or any time or all the time. Standing behind the Tudor clock, he racked his brain to recall

the song they used to sing. Something about going back there in the apple-blossom season. The tune haunted and evaded him. He was struck suddenly with the fatuity of his voyage East.

"There's only a gentleman here



"Behind the clock Henry was torn with emotion."

married. This old rubbish-heap his very own for ever and ever!

"What beats me is how anyone could leave here," said that slow baffling voice.

Where had he heard it before? Long ago. It must be twenty years ago. In Virginia. Which had the groundwork of

now," Mrs. Angel was bleating. "An American gentleman. Doubtless he'll leave now. His name is Mr. Biltner."

"Not Henry Biltner?"

"Yes, Mum. Mr. Henry Biltner."

There was a long silence. Behind the clock Henry was torn with emotion. Surely

—no, of course that was not possible. And yet—and yet... Such was the painful indecision and poignancy of Henry's mind.

"Was that his car I saw at the back

entrance?"

"If there was a car at the back drive," corrected Mrs. Angel with the quiet consideration of an ancient régime for raw civilisations, "if there was a car it would be Mr. Riltner's. Yes, Mum, and he must be in the house, for here is his hat."

"Idiot!" snarled Henry. "Silly old

codger!"

There was another long and frightful silence, and suddenly Henry was afraid they would say, "What's that loud 'thumping'?" and no one would know it was his heart. For he knew. He knew for sure it was Araminta Coral. Araminta, whom he had loved so much that when he tried to tell her all about it she had giggled her head off, being about sixteen at the time and not grounded in the delicacies. Araminta, the belle of Richmond! My goodness gracious, how it all came back! What a heap of trouble he had gone through because of Araminta! Why, if it had not been for Araminta he would never have run away to New York City, and if he had never run away to New York City he would never have been a millionaire—no, sir, nor anything except a cornstalk. Gradually he had worked Araminta out of his system. He had not forgotten her so much as isolated her by a refusal to remember just how lovely she looked the day he ran away and called from the horse-shay, "I'm going, Araminta. You'll never set human eyes on me again!" How she had laughed! My goodness gracious, that girl had the queerest sense of humour. It wounded Henry so much that he decided he would live one of those fine lonely lives the poets shout about. What Araminta decided nobody knew. But she never married.

"You say he's somewhere around?"

she was asking.

Mrs. Angel, being a religious woman, was never sure of anything, but she could

not see how a hat could just come there. "Then I'll find him," said Araminta. "Is that a piano in there? My, what a room! Elegant? I should just say so. I've often read of rooms like this. I'll just play a simple little tune. Would you say Mr. Biltner was a young man?"

"No," said Mrs. Angel truthfully.

"I always liked his laugh. Does he laugh quite a heap?"

"No," replied Mrs. Angel. "He is a very quiet gentleman with a sad smile."

"I suppose," said Araminta persuasively, "you'd put me down as full-grown?"

Mrs. Angel hesitated. "Ladies are so clever nowadays," she said, averting her gaze.

Araminta closed the conversation in her old abrupt fashion. She commenced to play. Her fingers drew from those yellow keys the haunting wistful refrain of "Virginia in the Dawning"—that half-forgotten song Henry had last heard on a hay-cart outside Richmond town. Her voice passed from that silent room through the dark hall where Henry stood, and went echoing down oak passages and into spell-bound rooms. It ceased, and far away the chime of the stable clock floated back.

Then Henry knew. He understood. It made him feel ashamed when he thought of Anne and Mildred. This was the real thing. He had loved Araminta in silence all those solitary years. Stealing from behind the clock, he made frantic gestures of distress to Mrs. Angel. She approached. He pointed to the threshold. "Go away," he whispered. "Go right away. Stay away."

Mrs. Angel was relieved to do so. If there was to be a ghastly murder, she preferred the shrubberies.

When her sloppy feet had conveyed her into the silence, Henry drew that magnificent engagement ring from his pocket and, with an effort, said suddenly in a fervent, tremulous voice, "Araminta—Araminta Coral—I'm come back again!"

That is about all there is to tell.



# MANUEL DE FALLA AND HIS MUSIC

## A PERSONAL STUDY

### By WATSON LYLE•

ELDOM has the union of music and the dance—arts both springing from the primary force in Nature, rhythm, yet begetting an essentially sophisticated daughter, the Ballet-produced such a fascinating child as Manuel de Falla's "El Sombrero de Tres Picos," or, as we have come to know it familiarly in this country, "The Three-cornered Hat." The Russian Ballet gave it for the first time in London at the Alhambra, on July 22nd, 1919, and its career here, and throughout the greater part of Europe, has been a brilliant one. It has made the name of de Falla well-known wherever the delightful art-form of which it is an advanced example thrives.

"The Three-cornered Hat" is the second ballet composed by de Falla, who had already written other works of various kinds, and studied much at home and abroad, before giving this evidence of the maturity of his art. At the time of its initial performance in London he was fortythree years of age, having been born at Cadiz on November 23rd, 1876, and it was there that he began the study of music whilst still very young. In Madrid he studied the piano under José Tragó, and composition, which he felt from the first to be his true medium, under Felipe Pedrell. Pedrell who, with his pupils, may be said to have brought about the renaissance of music, in its creative branches, in the Peninsula. Two of these pioneers-Isaac Albeniz and Granadosare dead, but three others, Joaquin Turina, Conrado del Campo, and Enrique Morera, remain active disciples of Pedrell, in addition to de Falla, who is now generally regarded as the foremost living Spanish composer.

It is a mistake to suppose, however, that until the advent of this school of modern, and national, composition Spain remained musically dormant for centuries. So far as the performance of music goes, Spain has always been an exceedingly active country. Music that is much more beautiful, and much more difficult, technically, than the music usually heard in any but the largest cathedrals here, is regularly sung by the boys in the church choirs in Spain. This standard of proficiency is so general as to be commonplace. Folksongs, which have been part of the national life for ages, and the continuance of the custom of serenading, even into this twentieth century, all encourage a love of music. The wandering tribes of gypsies have distinctive music. Their songs are generally sung in Zincali, the Gitano language, although sometimes translated into Spanish. Then there is the music of exotic, Moorish type found in remote parts of Andalucia —de Falla is an Andalucian—as well as the songs of the Atlantic coast which bear a kinship to our Celtic idiom.

It is upon this foundation of national music that de Falla, following Pedrell, has built his art, with but little direct employment of folk-tunes, although naturally enough his music shows a bias towards the idiom of Andalucia, as well as other influences. When, at length, he realised an early ambition, and went to live and study in Paris in 1907, he found a welcome, amongst others, from Debussy, and his intimate friend, Paul Dukas. The composer of the famous "Prélude à l'Aprèsmidi d'un Faune" was then the solitary being who lived with the child he so dearly loved, and his second wife. He was a totally different-looking individual from the

passionate, strange, and untamed youth, with the dead white face and coal-black eyes and hair, who, in the 'eighties, began to set musical Europe by the ears. Despite his less romantic appearance in middle age, he impressed the young Spanish composer, of whose esteem we have evidence in the "Homenaje pour le tombeau de Claude Debussy," published in 1921, for guitar, and the early "Trois mélodies," for voice and piano, to the poems of Théophile Gautier, which he dedicated to Mme. Debussy, in 1909. One must remember, however, that de Falla did not make his entry into the musical life of the French capital as a nonentity. His first opera, "La Vida Breve," had already been acclaimed by the Academia de Belles Artes in 1905.

Anyone who has been privileged to meet de Falla will not wonder at the friendship extended to him upon his arrival in Paris. His engaging personality, apart from his rising reputation as a composer, was sufficient to account for that. His short, slight figure and lean, sinewy tanned hands give the impression of great reserves of nervous energy, although in his movements he is dignified and deliberate, unless when conducting. Then he becomes so dominated by the emotion of the music and by its rhythmic urge, that the amount of energy expended is truly surprising. But whether in private or in public, one quickly forgets all about the slight, purposeful figure, in the interest awakened, and held, by his thin, sensitive, ascetic face. It is heavily lined, with prominent, bridged nose, and the domed skull of the intellectual. Notwithstanding the tanning, and deep lines due to prolonged exposure to strong sunlight, it is a rather pale face. In repose there is a hint of tiredness, or tolerant boredom—it is difficult to judge which—in his dark brown eyes. But in conversation his face becomes vividly animated, with an interest that is almost childlike in its freshness. Life is real, but nevertheless in the nature of a pageant for him, a pageant which, one feels, he views from the citadel of a now calm and reflective self, rather than one in which he himself plays a part.

This analytical habit of mind is frequently manifested in his music, as, for instance, in the sparkling realism of the tone-colour in his "Noches en los Jardines de España." This suite of beautiful pieces, cast in the form of a series of Symphonic Impressions for solo piano and orchestra,

contains a very personal interest of another kind, in that they are really intimate pictures of scenes dear and familiar to him. Home thoughts, and the homeland countryside, with the sharp contrasts of light and shade in the gardens, both famous, and of private residences in Spain, find their imagery in the music. For many years de Falla has had his home in one of the most romantic environments in the world, within the precincts of the Alhambra, Granada. When, therefore, he paints a glowing, tonal picture "En el Generalife" (In the Generalife) he portrays for us part of his own surroundings. But, even at this close, imaginative range, so to say, his sense of perspective remains acute. In the soft, rustling tremolos of the opening, and the nobility of the principal themes with their attendant arabesques, drawing to a dignified conclusion, we glimpse the giant cypresses, so ancient that they are said to have been young in the thirteenth century, and the imposing alabaster Fountain of the Lions of the old garden which was sold to the Sultan Ima'il-Ibn-Faraj in 1320, by a Moorish architect. After the hardships of his early years this neighbourhood came as sanctuary to the soul of the artist. The atmosphere of this abiding-place is in perfect accord with his deep love for his country, the love of the patriot to whom the very trees, the mountains, and the countryside mean even more than his compatriots, although naturally enough folk-lore and folk-song have attracted him greatly.

In this haven, free from disturbing influences, he follows his art, working at his scores with the meticulous regard of a worker in precious metals for perfection and finish. Time and again a completed work may be re-cast to fit with his ideas of finality, although it may already have had a successful performance in an earlier version. His first opera and his two ballets have undergone alterations in this way, and if I remember rightly, the "Noches en los Jardines de España," as at present played, are not exactly the "Nights" first presented to the public. Possibly this idealistic method of working may account for the smallness of his output, compared with other composers of his age, most of whom have, in fact, written more music than he has, while a few have more than trebled his total. On the other hand, from my knowledge of the composer, and from the surprising freshness and individual style of his melodic vein (his music is rich in tuneful

themes), I am inclined to attribute the comparatively meagre number of his compositions to the fact that, rather than consciously woo his muse, he waits until she comes to him. When she beckons he is all attention, and presses his suit, working out their mutual salvation with all the ardour of a new lover.

The reputation of de Falla rests primarily upon his creative art, although he conducts, and is a pianist of delicately expressive powers, but by no means orthodox technique. In the performance of his own music in public he imparts a vitality, or rather a vivid realisation, to the tonecolour that seems just to elude other pianists, however they may otherwise contrive to maintain much of its fascinating originality. This first impressed me when I came to compare his playing of the part for solo piano in the "Nights" at his second London appearance in the Queen's Hall on May 20th, 1921, with subsequent performances of the work by other pianists. Quite recently, at his last London appearance in the Aeolian Hall on June 22nd of the present year, he played the harpsichord in his own concerto for that instrument (or piano) flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, and violoncello. It was evident, however, that his technique was unsuited to the special needs of the harpsichord in the matter of tone-production. When the concerto was played

for the first time with the composer at the piano the effect was much better.

"La Vida Breve," the first important work by de Falla, is an opera in two acts and four scenes, to the book, and also to the memory, of Carlos Fernandez-Shaw. The action takes place in the Granada of the present day. The opera, although dated 1905, was not published until 1913.

It is the tragic story of the unhappy love of the heroine (Salud) for the hero (Paco). In accordance with grand opera tradition Salud dies at the end of the last act, a victim to the treacherous conduct of her lover. "La Vida Breve" was produced at the Casino, Nice, on April 1st, 1913, but did



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not reach the Spanish stage until the following year, although it had already been performed at the Opéra-Comique on January 7th, 1914. In Spain it aroused tremendous enthusiasm by the national setting and the deep human interest of the somewhat conventional subject. Musically, the writing shows less originality in the harmonisation than we notice in later com-

positions, but the individual style does not greatly differ from that expressed some fourteen years later, as in "El Sombrero de Tres Picos," by which time his constructive manner may be regarded as fixed.

We, in England, did not hear the music of his earlier ballet, "El Amor Brujo" (Love, the Wizard), until 1921, when its first English performance took place at one of the series of Goossens' orchestral concerts in the Queen's Hall on November 23rd, although it was completed by 1915, and produced, as a ballet, in April of that year at the de Lara Theatre, Madrid. A concert version of the music, conducted by the composer, was given on June 22nd, here at the concert already alluded to. As in his later and more famous ballet, there is a vocal part, and a quite definite plot interest, the subjects for both works being taken from the tales of G. Martinez-Sierra. threads of the story in the average ballet are so fragile as to be worn through, periodically, by the choreographic interpolations, but in his works in this form de Falla makes a gesture to something more definite, something newer, that might be regarded as opéra-ballet.

The story of "El Amor Brujo" is sufficiently novel to be worth outlining. It is eerie. The heroine, Candelas, young, beautiful, and very passionate, feels herself to be still under the spell of love for her dead lover, a fascinating but unfaithful young gipsy. His Spectre intervenes between her and her new lover, Carmelo, and prevents the perfect kiss of love. But Carmelo, remembering the flirtatious disposition of his former rival when alive, persuades Lucia, a pretty gipsy girl-friend of Candelas, to flirt with the Spectre when next it appears, and tempt it to avowals so that its spell over Candelas may be broken, and the lovers may attain happiness. Their plot succeeds. The Spectre is unable to resist the blandishments of Lucia. the lovers exchange the kiss defeating the evil spell, and the Spectre perishes, vanquished by love. This fantastic allegory of the triumph of Love over Death has inspired de Falla to write music that charms as much by its wealth of suggestive tonecolour as by the novelty of its rhythm. Nor has it been necessary for him to work from a crowded palette. With little more than an isolated tone-quality, and the simplest of harmonic devices in "El Circulo Mágico," he manages perfectly to create an impression of isolation and the

working of the "black art"; while the scintillating vitality of the "Danza ritual del Fuego, Para ahuyentar los malos espíritus" (Fire ritual dance for the exorcising of evil spirits) derives from the suggestion of restless energy in the accompaniment figures. In an arrangement for piano this dance is a favourite with recitalists. Then there is an expressive "Canción del Amor Dolido" (Song of Love's Chagrin) and the intense "Danza del Terror" to add to one's wonder at the absence of this fine ballet from the repertoire of the Russians. It has both a popular and an intellectual appeal.

There is considerable novelty in the form of de Falla's latest big work for the stage, his opera "El Retablo de Maese Pedro" (Master Peter's Puppet Show), published in 1924, and performed in the Aeolian Hall on June 22nd in a concert version. The book is founded on an episode taken from Cervantes' Don Quixote, of how the fair Melisendra, wife of Don Gayferos, was taken captive by infidel Moors, and held in a Spanish prison in Saragossa, until rescued by her husband. He rides to her prison, from which she escapes by a window and drops on to his saddle-bow. They pursued by the Moors. Such is the little play enacted in Master Peter's Puppet Show, on the marionette stage within the stage proper. Master Peter's assistant, the Boy, explains the action, mostly in recitative, and in a hurried gabble (as would happen actually), to the spectators, Don Quixote, his lady Dulcinea, and others who are staying at the country inn where Master Peter has set up his show. The harangue by the Boy is frequently interrupted by Don Quixote who at length becomes so excited, when it seems that the escaping pair will be re-taken, that he jumps up, draws his sword, and slashes the puppets, representing the Moors, to pieces, believing them, in his mental unsoundness, to be real people. Master Peter, ruin staring him in the face with the destruction of his show, protests, and appeals to the spectators. Don Quixote is equally vigorous in proclaiming to Dulcinea and the rest the benefit of Knights Errant to the world, and the curtain descends upon an ironic situation.

The music to this blending of comedy and tragedy is built up, bit by bit, in emotional significance until the intensity of the scene between the crazy Don and the showman is arrived at and we hear, in the warring

harmonies, a tonal reflection of the disputes upon the stage, and the havoc that is being wrought upon the puppet show. In agreement with the spirit of the action, it thus transpires that the music is less gracious in melody than is customary with de Falla; but the cacophonous patches in the score are inevitable, and the ear appreciates their import the better for the prevailing beauty and clarity of the harmony. In the directions for performance it is stated that the characters of the Don, Dulcinea, the Boy, Master Peter, and spectators may be large puppets, or else actors wearing masks, presumably to emphasise the idea of a charade.

The "Siete Canciones populares Españolas" (Seven Popular Spanish Songs) for voice and piano show—as, indeed, does all the music of de Falla—the vast difference there is between the real and the spurious "Spanish" idiom in music, an idiom of which most folks have gained an erroneous impression from "Carmen." The suppressed excitement of "El Paño moruno" (a Moorish dance), the languor of the "Asturiana," the abandon of the "Jota" (a popular dance in which castanets are rattled) and the exquisite repose of the "Nana" (Lullaby), all typify contrasts in mood of this Southern race. They mirror the national character with greater fidelity than whole volumes of dully-written topography. To this genre belong also the four "Pièces Espagnoles," for piano, dedicated to the brilliant contemporary (in 1908) of the composer, Isaac Albeniz, although they do not escape the Gallic influences of their period.

In the "Fantasia Bætica," for piano, written in 1919, and published three years later, de Falla has made a notable addition to the works of thoroughly modern style available for the virtuoso pianist. It happens to be colourful music as well as keyboard fireworks, and is dedicated to Arthur Rubinstein.

Apart from his operas and his ballets, both of which, as we have seen, contain vocal parts, de Falla does not appear to be attracted by the human voice en masse (i.e. choirs) as an expressive medium, and the list of his published works does not include anything whatsoever of a choral description. He finds in instrumental music all he needs to express the sound creations of his imaginative gifts to his public without the fetters necessarily imposed by the use of language, spoken or sung, and in this we may find an explanation of his neglect, so far, of choral music. From among his unpublished works mention may be made of a Poème, for medium voice and orchestra, "Psyché," to a poem by G. Jean-Aubry. Arrangements have been made of his Petite Suite Espagnole for violin and piano by Paul Kochanski, and for violoncello and piano by Maurice Marèchal.

#### ON AN EPITAPH.

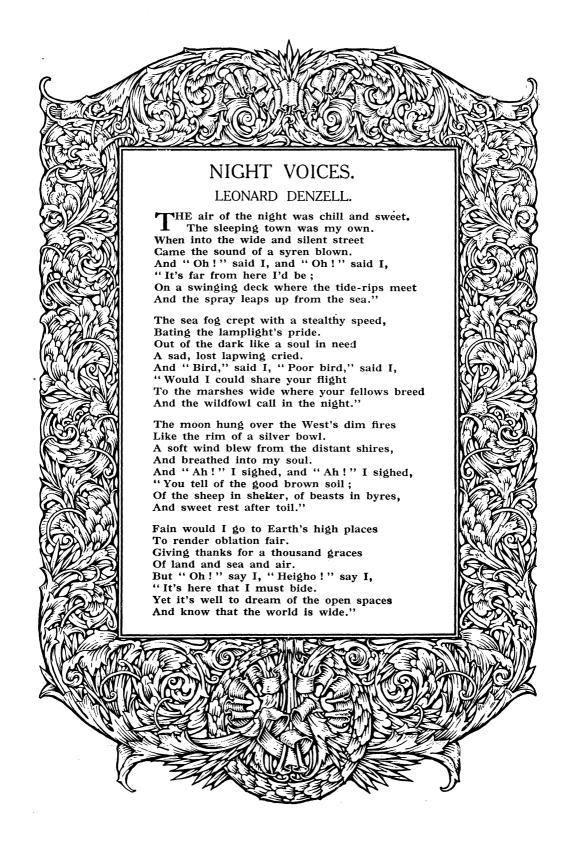
"In memory of Stephen, who departed this life at the age of ten months, 3rd July, 18—."

YOU little one who never knew the stars,
Nor saw the moon, nor yet the sweet green earth;
Who ne'er took part in life's tumultuous wars;
Who knew not men, nor ever learned their worth:

You never heard the lark's glad note in Spring, Nor took the road beneath a winter sky, Nor saw the Autumn swallows on the wing, Nor knew the sea, nor heard the sea-birds cry;

You never knew the things that men hold dear,
For which they live and count their lives a prize,
But for two months short of a little year
You knew all beauty in your mother's eyes.

JOHN INGLISHAM.



## AFTERMATH

## By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

LIZABETH glanced to right and left, realising solitude below to mount the hill. It stretched to mount the hill stretch of before her attractively, a clean stretch of roadway gloriously aslant. The level roads of her home place had grown tedious. This upward sweep had the charm of the unknown. The summit might offer anything in the nature of a surprise—a forest, the distant glimpse of a city, the sea perhaps. She quickened her pace.

"This time I've evaded them," she

laughed to herself.

She was not used to climbing; the hilltop found her breathless but determined. Even yet the road refused to give up its ultimate secret. She saw a level plateau with the white track of roadway stretched tape-like across it. Half-way across the plateau there was a house by the roadside. She would walk as far as the housefarther if time allowed.

Up here the air was tonic. A friendly half-blustering wind tweaked at her hat and mocked at the neat braids of her hair. She took her hat off and let the wind have its way. Her cheeks glowed; from head to foot she felt alive and alert. Her transit from the summit of the hill to the half-way house was done in fine style, head erect and shoulders squared. The house when she came to it showed a garden set with tea-tables. She selected a table under the shade of a tree and decided to allow herself a breathing space. It was early still.

"Excuse me—is this yours?"

Somebody—a tall man in grey—was handing her a purse-bag.

"Why, yes. How careless of me."

"The chain is broken. I saw it drop in the grass."

"I should have had to pawn my watch to pay for my tea," she found herself

"I did just that once," the man laughed. "I had changed suits and forgot to change the cash from one pocket to the other.

There was nothing save watch or scarfpin for it. Perhaps"-he held out his hand for her bag—"if you'll allow me I can put the chain right for you."

⊚

She watched him, busy with his penknife closing up the gaping link. He matched the day and the place in some inarticulate way. He and convention seemed remote; a big breezy personality at one with the moorlands and the quick invigorating rush of the wind. She liked his voice, resonant and well trained. His hands too -she saw them completely deft and capable. And there was an ingenuous look in his eyes that made her feel amazingly safe with him.

"These toys aren't made to safeguard money," he suggested. "It's well you carry a watch to pawn if necessary. You may even need it this afternoon," he smiled at her. "This place has that doubtful asset—a monopoly. Either you pay their price or die of thirst on the roadway. There's no other house for miles."

"Miles?" She caught at the word. Her voice lilted. "Did you say miles?"

He was looking at her with quizzical eyes. "You have walked them. I saw you tramping the highway. I came from one end of the plateau and you from the other till we met at the half-way house."

"Miles." She was laughing under her

breath. "Actually."
"Why——?" He checked his question as over curious, but she threw him her answer

"Simply that I'm supposed not to be

a good walker. As for miles——"

His was the next table to hers and conversation was possible over their tea. It seemed churlish now to sit silent. Here on the heights one could not move on stilts. And he was incredibly easy to talk with. Elizabeth felt a queer sense of concord; this chance encounter already spelt them affinities. His name slipped out in some travel talk he launched into presently. Farnwick—she had an altogether absurd desire to toss him her own name. Elizabeth—without  $_{
m her}$ surname. Caseby. To-day, and her escape from the plains, seemed to mate only with her Christian name. Caseby held implications that to-day for an hour or two she had left behind.

"There's a storm brewing," Farnwick said suddenly.

She followed the direction of his pointing finger. "How long?"

"So you have never come down?"

"Never. But most days I climb from my valley to the plateau, and come to the Edge of Beyond.'

"I like that—your sense of mystery, veiled things. There was something like that in my mind when I determined to climb my side of the hill to-day."

"Determined"—he picked up her word, studying her accent. "You sound as

if you'd escaped."

'Well, in a sense—and for an hour



the plain. That is if you go now."

"Î must." She rose hurriedly. They would be so anxious, those others. In imagination she could hear their ejaculations of dismay.

Out on the high road she found Farnwick at her side.

"May I? As far as the dip of the road. I never go farther."

"Why not?"

"I prefer to leave something to the imagination. From the hill-top your plain looks alluring, a dream valley.

was half laughing.

His glance was full of good-humoured understanding. "You're probably the type of woman who has always known protection," he ventured. "A pretty slip of a creature-" He checked himself. His next sentence came after a silent moment. "Forgive the phrase—it came to my tongue's end but should have stayed there."

He was entirely ingenuous, she decided. All her instincts told her that her newfound acquaintance rang true. He was a good-humoured giant; his companionship and the clean bracing air of the moors were mated.

The storm materialised suddenly. It was about them like an enemy sprung from ambush. The sweep of moorlands had temporary resemblance to the sea, mist-wreathed and perpetually in movement. Mists billowed about their feet and showed advancing mimic waves that threatened to engulf them. The rain was presently a succession of flails about their shoulders. Farnwick slipped his coat off and put it about Elizabeth's shoulders.

"You'll get soaked." He glanced at her thin shoes, her flimsy hat. "Well, I suppose you'd no idea of this when you set out?"

"No, not the least." She gave a quick trill of laughter. Had he but known she had simply opened the gate from the hotel garden, slipped into the road, and commenced to run—

"Your people down in the valley will be

anxious," he suggested.

"Very." Her eyes still held mirth. He had so little conception of their anxiety, the amazing depths of it.

A thick clump of gorse bushes offered slight shelter, and they crouched with their backs to the storm.

"It won't last long," Farnwick said.
"I'd advise you to hurry as soon as it moderates. Don't give yourself time to cool. And change your wet things, of course."

"They'll make me," she nodded. "Prob-

ably hot-water bottles too."

He laughed at her tone. She liked his laugh. And his hair—flecked with grey

over the temples.

"There's another thing," he ventured after a minute's silence. "This is a lonely road—only that one house for several miles. I don't suppose your folks realised or they wouldn't have let you tackle it alone. Still"—he smiled at her—"I know parents, or uncles and aunts, can't keep up with the younger generation. You'd want to swing off on your own. Still—they shouldn't have allowed it."

"I ran off," she confessed.

The storm's buffeting had made her colouring vivid. Her hair, escaped from bands, was a lovely confusion about her ears and neck. She felt aglow from top to toe. She had never felt better. The middle-aged giant at her side seemed to

push her into a place of abounding youth. When they began to walk again her steps kept easy pace with his long stride.

At the top of the hill they said goodbye. Once they waved to each other. She was aware that for some little time he stood and watched her descent.

She came to the valley, still aglow. At the hotel entrance she hesitated for a moment. It would be necessary to make her truancy comprehensible to the others. And they were not as a rule quick to understand.

When their amazed ejaculations broke on her she felt herself submerged under the waves of their dismay.

"Mother—where have you been? We've hunted high and low, Jack and I. You've given us the fright of our lives."

"Rather. Such a storm too."

"You're wet through. Your shoes—those flimsy ones you never go out of the house in! Really, Mother—"

"A pretty slip of a creature . . . you'd want to swing off on your own . . . uncles and aunts can't keep up with the younger generation . . ."

"Molly . . . Jack . . . I'm as right as a trivet. A little wetting doesn't matter."
"See to her, Molly," Jack counselled.

"You'll know what to do."

"Rather."

"But I'm all right," Elizabeth insisted.
"You soon will be," Molly affirmed.

They had always wrapped her in cottonwool. A widowed Mother, frail, impractical—and two stalwarts, son and daughter, intent on her protection. That was her case in epitome.

Ensconced on the sofa in her bedroom, and with a hot-water bottle to her feet, she escaped explanations. It was easy to feign fatigue. Through half-veiled eyes she watched them. They were an intense couple, older than their years. Their father had been like that—ardent and serious. Cotton-wool—she had stifled under folds of it. To-day on the moors she had thrown it aside and opened her lungs. Movement—she imaged the stiff slope of

We have something to tell you. Jack goes

up to town on Monday and I'd like to go

the hill road, the tussle with wind and rain. Glorious!

They were talking together at the window. By implication they left her high and dry

with him for a week or two." She enumerated shopping details. "But of course we can't leave you alone." "Why not, for once?" Elizabeth venred. "Simply for a week or two—"
"It wouldn't do, Mater," Jack insisted. "You'd get dull. Molly's writing to Aunt Hendon to ask her to come down and keep you company." Elizabeth had a moment's panic-shot with mind pictures. She must be alone, free for a time. She moved her feet in the flush of determination and half rose from the sofa. "Lie still, darling. You're worn out. Where did you walk to?" "I went along a road," Elizabeth murmured. "You really mustn't do such absurdities," Jack smiled at her. They were adorable—and she was stifled. "Not Aunt Hendon," she said with conviction. "The letter is posted," Jack told her. "Her voice hardened, hurried. She tossed him truth, unglossed.' outside the stream of their chatter. They pushed her into a niche of permanent Motherhood. Figuratively they were always pelting her with her forty-four years. "A pretty slip of a creature . . ." the echo drummed. She had seemed that to a stranger. Odd how Motherhood set one apart in a sealed chamber. To those two against the window she seemed the epitome of middle age, drained dry of emotion.

They were looking at her with attentive "Asleep, darling?" Molly asked. " No ?

" Dearest, we couldn't enjoy ourselves in town and leave you lonely." Molly's hand

came softly on to Elizabeth's hair and stroked it. "You have a lot of hair, Mother. When you were young it must have been

lovely."

"I believe it was," Elizabeth murmured. Echoes were still persistent, besieging her. . . . "A pretty slip of a creature . . . uncles and aunts can't keep pace with the younger generation." She laughed suddenly.

"What's up, Mater? Share the joke." "It's untranslatable," Elizabeth said.

She was guilty of a sense of excitement. They were going away, these two. Aunt Hendon, the austere, could be more easily evaded than they; she had forty winks, for instance, every afternoon. There would be delectable chances of escape.

"Have a good time in town, you two,"

Elizabeth said aloud.

"We shall. And we'll come back with lots to tell you."

That was the case in a nutshell. They would toss her crumbs from their banquet. Shelved, she could still peep into the arena. For one hot moment Elizabeth hated the sheer arrogance of youth.

They tiptoed from her room, thinking her shut eyelids spelt sleep. She heard their voices presently in the tennis-court under her window. She was glad Monday came so sharply on the heels of Saturday. The eternal youth in her strained at its leash

Fortune, she told herself, was occasionally on the side of the middle-aged. Aunt Hendon's telegram of regret came half an hour after Molly and Jack's departure. They would not know. They would picture her caught into the mesh of Aunt Hendon's care, whilst in reality she knew freedom. This afternoon they would think her comfortably reclining on a sofa, whilst as a matter of fact she mounted the hill-path, glorying in it. The plateau seemed more



"As if he sensed a change in her he said quickly: 'Don't answer me yet. Come up here once more—next week if you'd like so much time for breathing space.'"

easily gained this time, and the level stretch of roadway held even more of allurement. She could have laughed at her own appetite as she sat at the tea-table. She was like a schoolgirl set free in the midst of sugar buns.

"Again?" Farnwick's voice came presently. "And after my warning?"

"I never delivered it," she retorted.

It seemed inevitable that he should choose the next table. Comradeship flowers quickly, given affinity of temperament.

"That was wrong of you," he said gravely. Elizabeth turned protestingly. "Not reproof. I'm surfeited with it. This is escape."

Farnwick's gravity took temporary flight. "There's youth and its arrogance. You chafe at the care and forethought that some day you'll miss. One's parents don't live for ever, Miss——" His pause was invitation.

"Caseby," she said hurriedly. "Eliza beth Caseby."

"That's nice of you," he commented.

" Nice ? "

"To give me the Elizabeth as well."

Beneath the immaterial trifles of their speech something of import stirred. They were akin. Speech was a clumsy vehicle—and not necessary. It was a case merely, beneath which their sense of comradeship was moulding. Elizabeth found herself barely noticing his words—veils merely to the certainty of what he was. Straighteyed, firm-lipped, clean-souled—she had him labelled and docketed in a pigeon-hole of her consciousness.

"There'll be no storm this time," he said presently. "There's no need to rush it to-day."

Conversation was more vital during the walk to the plateau's edge. She learnt things about him—his love of travel, his hobbies. They came all too soon to the downward sweep of the roadway. She took it this time at a leisurely pace. There was nobody in the valley to be anxious. Half-way down she turned and saw him erect against the skyline, still watching her.

Well—why not? Why not enjoy this flower of affinity that had blossomed? Youth—what was it? It was inherent to-day in her every breath. She was youth incarnate. Her youth had merely been shut away, entrapped. Freed, it was winged reality.

Sunshine and clear skies aided Elizabeth and Farnwick's friendship. There was no

hitch to the sequence of their meetings. Day followed day—lovely sheaths to the unfolding flower of their comradeship. He was entirely frank. He gave her details of his family history and position. He should insist, he told her, on coming to see her people when they returned. He should like their friendship to have the stamp of her family's approval. She could have laughed—or wept. To this middle-aged giant at her side she was youth in epitome. . . . "A pretty slip of a creature. . . ."

Conscience of course pricked at his "Miss Caseby." She wished he would have ventured the "Elizabeth." She was Elizabeth. Caseby was an appendage, a label sewn on the outside.

The last day of the fortnight went heavily footed. She drooped at thought of to-morrow's return.

"Why?" he asked her.

"Freedom has attractions." She achieved a laugh.

He came to a pause, staring at her. "You're not happy. They—surely they're good to you, your people?"

"Good? They wrap me in love. They think, dream, eat and drink to the tune of my necessities."

"Lucky person," Farnwick sighed. "I'm

a lonely fellow."

Hard on the heels of his confession of loneliness came his quick sentences of avowal. She was his dream woman. She was answer to question. She was goal to his quest.

Youth? She was drowning in seas of it. It surged to her lips and half choked her. She struggled breathless to a foothold of explanation.

"Those others . . . down in the valley

. . . they would be horrified."

"Would they?" He had the audacity to laugh. "It's a way they have."

She was able to add tersely, "You don't know them. They're adamant."

"Are they?" His shrug set them aside

as negligible.

"You don't ask who they are," she said quickly. "You guess. You come to your conclusions. The truth is as far from you as the valley is."

His laughter checked, he stared at her in silence. She felt his silence like the rungs of a ladder up which she must climb.

Her voice hardened, hurried. She tossed him her truth, unglossed. She was a widow. Her son and daughter were grown up now—eighteen and twenty. She could not look at him. That in her which was youth felt suddenly shrivelled and dry. Figuratively it fell stricken at her feet. And his silence lasted interminably. It was a wall, a high barrier.

"Well," he said finally, "I still don't

see where the shoe pinches."

She threw her head back, meeting his eyes. They adored her, laughed at her.

"I'm forty-four," she said, "and you

thought me-what?"

"I never reckoned. To me you were youth—you are still. Years are such futile things—tags only. Tags—you'd have me look at them when I only want you, Elizabeth. These young people of yours"—his laugh came resonantly—"they've no authority? They can't forbid?"

She was looking down at her hands, locking and unlocking her fingers. Molly

... Jack ... they had claims.

As if he sensed a change in her he said

quickly:

"Don't answer me yet. Come up here once more—next week if you'd like so much time for breathing space."

The hill's descent seemed interminable to Elizabeth to-day. At the hotel entrance she fought a desire for flight. Her watch showed her that she was late. Already Molly and Jack would have arrived.

Their ejaculations reached her quickly.

"Mother—how well you look. Where's Aunt Hendon?"

"Bravo, Mater. You're none the worse for our absence."

In the sitting-room they put her into a lounge chair and piled cushions at her back. Their tongues worked incessantly. The history of their fortnight in town was condensed into staccato sentences for Elizabeth's ears. She had a feeling that some things were withheld as being too youthfully exuberant in nature for her understanding. Interlarded with their own adventures were ejaculations of condolence at Aunt Hendon's failure. "So lonely for you, dearest. . . . What have you done to pass the time?" . . .

Fortunately, as usual, they didn't expect her to be loquacious. They did the talking. She could drift into the deep channels of her own thoughts—Farnwick . . . she knew that at last she had met her affinity. Caseby had never been really that. Some buried essence of her personality was awake at last, alive, alert, touched to vitality by Farnwick's avowal.

She realised that the evening was rapidly

drawing to its close. Already Jack and Molly were suggesting the need of rest for her.

"I'll bring you a hot-water bottle," Molly told her.

"Not to-night," Elizabeth said firmly.

"But you always have one."

"The Mater has been hardening herself whilst we've been away," Jack laughed. "We're not having it, though. You're

going to be taken care of."

"Am I?" Elizabeth had half risen from the cushioned chair. She pushed aside their assiduous hands. "No... no. I'm quite able to move by myself. I'm not a hundred."

They laughed tolerantly. The tolerance set her own lips twitching. Youth was amusing in its arrogance.

"It's a superb sunset," Molly said.

"Look at the flaming sky."

"I'm looking," Elizabeth said. She slipped a hand through the arms of Molly and Jack, and the three stood at the window, watching.

"It's sad though," Molly suggested. "Sunsets always make me feel gloomy.

Give me sunrise."

Elizabeth was silent. But her silence was packed with consideration. She glanced hurriedly at these young faces, then back to the flaming west. They trusted her. She filled a niche. In their eyes her position of Motherhood was as immutable as the stars. They would regard Farnwick's avowal as almost an outrage. Their Mother in that relationship—recapturing the youth that they themselves had helped to shelve! They would be aghast. They would know sharp repulsion. Unnatural—she could almost hear the words on their lips. But she was still the Elizabeth of the moorlands. She was incredibly young inside. She had a queer sense of immaturity standing beside this self-confident couple. Youth was more vitally hers to-night than theirs. The living essence of it was in her soul.

"Penny for your thoughts, Mother."
"Sunset," Elizabeth said quickly.

"The rosy old chap's gone down," Jack said. "Now there's—what's the word, Mater?"

" Aftermath."

When they left her she took pen and paper. It would be difficult to write her refusal to Farnwick. She must concentrate, choose words that would show clearly her sense of responsibility.

They were talking under her window . . . softly at first . . . then with amazed ejaculations.

"Mrs. Caseby? My mother?"

Then Farnwick's resonant tones.

"I found it by the roadside when I went back along the moor road. It was lying near the tea-house gate."

"Mother's bag . . . the tea-house . . .

moors . . ."

For the life of her Elizabeth could not keep her lips from twitching. They were aghast. They were, for the moment, merely startled infants stripped of reasoning powers.

"She's a fine walker," Farnwick was saying. "But certainly she needs looking after. This is the second time I've rescued

her bag."

Elizabeth crossed to the window and peered through the screen of the curtain. There they were, the three who held her destiny in the cup of their palms. In the dusk their figures were half blurred, but Farnwick's towered above the others. She loved the sheer bulk of him. He was a giant come to rescue a captive Princess. She drew back from the folly of her imagery.

"Yes, she's in. In bed, probably, by

this time. She was tired."

"Elizabeth—tired? Not she. She's probably up there somewhere—laughing at us."

"Laughing at us?"

She was. They were so confident, so assured. In Farnwick's eyes she was unalterably young; in Molly and Jack's so inevitably middle-aged.

"Elizabeth."

She glanced down. Farnwick had seen her—the light behind her had been revelation. She pushed the curtain aside and leant from the window.

"You?" she said softly.

"Even I. Your bag again." He held it up reproachfully. "Certainly you need

taking care of."

"We do that." The duet came rapidly—but still with amazement softening its edge. They groped in mists. Who was this impetuous giant who called their mother "Elizabeth," who spoke of moors and comradeship?

She must go down and explain. But how? How say to Jack and Molly, "I am not old. I am younger than either of

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you—nearer to the heart of things youthful. And close just now to the skirts of romance. . . ."

Even in the midst of this turmoil Molly's thought ran in the old groove. "No, not here, Mother. You'll catch cold. We'll go into the writing-room. There'll be no

one there this time of night."

With the lights switched on they stared at each other. They were strangers all four of them to-night to accustomed ways. Elizabeth suddenly held out a hand that shook slightly. She felt Farnwick's grasp come, strong and reassuring. She looked tremulously at the others.

"I'm not old," she said quickly. "It's only that your eyes are out of focus."

There was silence at that. She had sped her arrow. She watched it quiver to its target. She saw them amazed—but groping honestly for understanding.

Farnwick bridged the gulf of silence. He had the grace to treat Molly and Jack seriously. He bowed to the implication of their responsibility in the matter. Elizabeth was the only woman in the world for him. She always would be . . . a pretty slip of a creature. . . Yes, she needed looking after. He was grateful to them for doing that so far. Now of course that would be his responsibility. His sentences were clearcut and emphatic. At least they saw to-night. They caught sight of the eternal youth that flouts mere Time.

Elizabeth's postscript to Farnwick's ex-

planation was in the sentences:

"You'll live your days. I want to live mine. I have the right."

After all, they were entirely lovable, those children. They hid discomfiture royally. Their manner held a suggestion of comradeship—as if in the future they would be willing to let Farnwick enter the charmed circle. Awkwardly, and with flushed faces, they retired presently . . . to leave these middle-aged lovers alone for awhile.

"That was nice of them," Farnwick commented.

"They're dears," Elizabeth said fervently. "So understanding. I believe they realise——"

"Yes? What do they realise?"

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"That aftermath may be as wonderful as sunrise," Elizabeth said softly.

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"Don't forget there's a job for you this morning."

# • • THE • • BABE'S REBELLION

By A. M. BURRAGE

BABE, dear," said Mrs. Twingrove to her brother, "don't forget there's a job for you this morning."

Mr. Eustace Hearn, aged twenty-two, looked across at her inquiringly. He resented being addressed as Babe, and had tried the experiment of pretending not to hear except when he was called by his proper name. The experiment had failed because his elder sister—and that beast Twingrove, who was jolly well served right for having married her—simply declined to call him anything but Babe. The habit had spread to their guests, who now almost filled the house which they had taken for the

season at Beauley-on-Sea. Nobody thought of calling Eustace anything but Babe.

The Babe regarded his sister narrowly and asked: "What job?"

"I want you to take the two-seater and run in to meet Eileen Clifford off the twelve-seventeen train. I positively can't spare Alex this morning, and besides, its somehow appropriate that you should meet her."

"Well, then, I jolly well won't," re-

turned the Babe with spirit.

"Yes, darling, you jolly well will," purred his sister. "Unless, of course, you want me to tell everybody about a certain incident which occurred in the autumn of

last year. Treacherous as I should feel in giving you away, Babe dearest——"

This, of course, was sheer blackmail. The nature of the incident, which she was for ever threatening to reveal whenever the Babe showed refractory symptoms, was never disclosed. It is neither here nor there. But it served its purpose in always bringing him to heel. He continued to protest, but he no longer flatly rebelled.

"But I don't know the beastly girl!" he

growled.

"Beastly girl! Babe, dear, you'll want to bite your tongue out soon for having

uttered those croo-el words."

"But look here, you idiot! I can't go barging up to every female freak who gets off the train and ask her if she's Eileen Clifford, can I?"

"There will be no need, little brother. I dropped her a line last night informing her that you would meet the train. Directly she sees the mole over your left eye she will utter a glad exclamation and leap into your arms. She will be looking out for the mole. As it's the second largest in the home counties, she can't very well miss it."

"Frightfully funny, aren't you?" growled the Babe. "It's a pity you didn't go on the stage. You might have got off with a Marquis then, instead of that stock-jobbing tick who presumes on being my brotherin-law by being funny with me."

Mrs. Twingrove gave him an unruffled

 $\mathbf{smile}$ .

"What is the matter with you, dear-r?" she murmured. "I am getting a perfectly sweet girl down here specially for your benefit, and instead of jumping at the chance of meeting her at the station you behave like a dog who knows he's going to be bathed. Now run along and don't argue any more. You needn't be afraid that she won't recognise you from my description, and even if she did I'm sure I've told you enough to help you to spot her."

"You sure have!" the Babe agreed

bitterly.

His sister's description of Miss Clifford had given him a feeling of almost physical discomfort. She had flaming red hair, green eyes, large freckles, extremely prominent front teeth and a complexion "something like thick tomato soup with tapioca in it." And in giving these ghastly details Mrs. Twingrove had spoken in a tone as if she were describing something too alluring for words.

But, to quote the Bard, worse remains behind. This monstrosity had been asked down specially for his benefit. They were to be thrown together. Innuendo was part of the small change of conversation in that unconventional house. Quite obviously the girl herself would soon be compelled to see the joke and then life would become intolerable. Mrs. Twingrove had been already blatantly frank both to him and to the other members of the party.

"The Babe," she had said, "has much too much money and much too little sense to be allowed at large. If I don't look after him I know he will be snapped up by some designing creature. That's why I'm asking this perfectly charming girl for his benefit."

The Babe thought of "the perfectly charming girl" and shuddered. Still there was no escape. He was still under parental authority and had to remain so under pain of losing his very liberal allowance. And parental authority had condemned him to spend the summer with the Twingroves.

Thus at a quarter of an hour before midday Eustace Hearn, growling to himself, entered the garage and cranked up the two-seater. He got in and backed expertly into the road, narrowly missing a perambulator. The nursemaid in charge gave him a look she had borrowed direct from the stage of the Lyceum.

"Might have been all for the best if I'd barged the kid over," reflected the Babe moodily. "Probably would have saved him a lot of misery when he comes to my

time of life."

The nearest railway station was five miles distant, but the Babe had plenty of time. He rattled merrily over a second-class road and was almost within shouting distance of the small town when he was aware of trouble in the cylinders. The car began to hop, skip and jump, and finally it stopped.

"Those wretched plugs again," reflected the Babe, scowling at the bonnet. "I suppose Alec's been drowning the thing with oil as usual. No use telling him, though."

He lifted a cushion and had already begun to grope for tools when a happy idea occurred to him. Although he knew exactly what was the matter and could take out a plug and clean it in the space of about a minute, the fact remained that he had broken down and the Fates had sent him a perfectly good excuse for failing to meet the train. He hadn't pretended to be a mechanic and nobody could possibly blame him. Indeed it was Alec's fault for being

over-generous with the lubrication. When the twelve-seventeen had safely come and gone and sufficient time had elapsed for him to make sure that Miss Clifford—ugh!—had got tired of waiting, he would walk into the town, get help from a garage, and have the bill sent in to his brother-in-law. That bill, in case of any argument, would be a sort of alibi. So he leaned gracefully against the back of the seat, lit a cigarette, and blinked almost contentedly at the bright blue sky.

Within a minute a Ford lorry had drawn up alongside and the voice of the workmandriver courteously inquired if he wanted help. The Babe said that he didn't; and within the next five or ten minutes half a dozen drivers of private cars had all stopped and

proffered assistance.

"Interfering blighters!" growled the Babe to himself, and he went on to reflect on the general cussedness of things. If he had really been in difficulties nobody would have stopped, and as it was nobody would

leave him in peace.

He glanced at his watch. The train was not due for another ten minutes, but it occurred to him that when that ten minutes was up he had better abandon his car. Whether Miss Clifford walked or whether she hired a car at the station she would have to pass that very spot. It would never do for her to see him sitting down in the car at his ease, to recognise him later, and to report on the matter. Punctually at twelve-seventeen he would abandon the derelict, walk very slowly into the town, take a long time over drinking one glass of beer and then seek a garage and a mechanic. He had just conceived this brilliant timewasting expedient when light rhythmic footfalls on the road caused him to look up. Having looked up, he sat up rigidly and stared.

A girl was approaching, tall, graceful, and walking rapidly with a delightful ease which somehow suggested the beating of a well-regulated heart. She wore a pale blue frock to match the heavens and the pair of eyes which looked out from under a little black brimless hat trimmed with corn-flowers. Her hair was fair, her complexion pink and white, and her skin as transparent as a poor excuse.

The Babe regarded her over the steering-wheel. This was a *real* girl. None of your Miss Cliffords! If his sister had only invited somebody like this——

Thought went off at a tangent. Would it be possible to speak to her? She was obviously bound for Beauley, or some house

on the way. What about offering her a lift? No, he couldn't do that—confound it!—with one or more plugs still sooted. Only one chance remained. He groped desperately for a spanner, stood up, assumed an air of deep trouble and perplexity, and passed a hand over his hair.

The girl, in passing, gave him a glance which seemed to include the whole landscape. Then suddenly she stopped, smiled

timidly and said:

"Are you in any trouble? Could I help?"

It had come off! The Babe grinned and mumbled something about not dreaming of troubling her.

"I happen to know something about cars.

What's the matter?"

"It—it won't go," stammered the Babe, who knew perfectly well what the matter was.

"I see. You mean it stopped?"

" Yes."

"Tried your plugs?"

"What are they?" he demanded blankly. The girl smiled as who should say: "Here is a poor mut who drives a car and knows nothing about it." Aloud she said briefly: "Plugs, I expect. Can you start your engine?"

"Yes, but she isn't firing properly. She

stops directly I put her in gear."

The girl went to the bonnet and lifted the

"Do you mind starting up?" she asked. He pressed the self-starter and the engine exhibited immediate symptoms of heart disease. The fair Samaritan then dived her hand into the open box of tools and then went round again to the open bonnet.

"Just as I thought," she announced a second or two later; "only two of 'em are sparking. Got a bit of clean rag and some

pliers?"

The deed was done in about two minutes. The Babe was able to race the engine. As he did so he broke into loud and happy prattle.

"Thanks most awfully. I'm always having trouble with those plugs. My brother-in-law simply lushes the old 'bus up with oil, and then, of course—""

Suddenly his jaw dropped and he came

to an abrupt pause.

"Then you did know what was the matter?" the girl said coldly.

" I—I—I—"

"Thank you. I suppose it is a sort of

joke. I should have known better than to interfere. Good morning."

"Oh, I say! Look here!" babbled the Babe. "I sort of lost my head when you spoke to me. You see, I broke down purposely---"

she may be upon me at any moment! Er—you don't happen to have just come off the train, do you?"

"I arrived this morning-"Not by the twelve-seventeen!"

"No. That's hardly in yet. I came by the eleven-thirty, which was dreadfully late."

One thing, the plugs are pretty safe to get sooted again in a minute or two. Where are you going? Mayn't I give you a lift?"

"What's the use, if you anticipate more



"He . . . stood up, assumed an air of deep trouble and perplexity, and passed a hand over his hair."

"You broke down purposely!"

"Well, I mean to say, when I did break down I didn't put it right because I didn't want to go and meet somebody at the station. You'd have done the same if you'd been me. And that reminds me-Heavens.

"Oh, we'll get as far as Beauley, if you're going that way. Please jump in. Or shall I turn first?"

The girl hesitated.

"You've plenty of time to go on and meet the twelve-seventeen," she said.

He inadvertently set the engine going again by stamping vigorously on the selfstarter.

"But I don't want to meet the twelveseventeen. I'll be shot if I meet the twelveseventeen!"

The girl smiled.

"Well," she said, "I suppose you know your own business, but—"

"It's like this. I've been sent in to meet somebody I don't want to meet. I had a

perfectly ripping excuse for dodging it until you came along and spoilt everything. Now all I can do is to run the car until the

"Suddenly she stopped, smiled timidly and said: 'Are you in any trouble? Could I help?'"

surplus oil does more of its deadly work. Jump up, and I'll run you into Beauley. It's better than walking.

The girl hesitated and then complied. The Babe turned the car and then set off at

a leisured pace along the road by which he had come.

"Where can I drop you?" he asked presently.

"I don't know. Anywhere."

"Mayn't I deposit you safely on the frontdoor step?"

"Which front-door step?"

"That's what I'm asking you. I thought

you were staying-"

"I am going to stay in Beauley, but it doesn't follow I know where I'm going to stay. People sometimes leave their luggage at the station and go round looking for a place, don't they?"

"Oh, I see. You want a hotel or a boardinghouse or rooms. Is that it?"

"Something like it. It's nice of you to take so much interest."

"Not at all. But I s'pose you Beauley's knowpretty full. Every meatsafe's been con-

> verted into a temporary bedroom. Suppose you can't get in anywhere ? "

"Then I'll have to go somewhere else."

"Just what I was thinking," said the Babe ruefully.

would be such a pity to lose you."

" Why ? "

"Oh, because because you're nice. Because you stop when you see a poor chap hung up on the road and-""

"-and risk making a fool of myself, I suppose. You needn't remind me of that!"

The car swerved dangerously, as the great idea came to the Babe. He began to drive as if he were in the middle of a police-trap.

"I say," he gasped, "what about coming to stay with us?

She eyed him coldly.

"A nice conventional suggestion," she

"Oh, it's quite all right. I've got a sister and cousins and aunts. The house is simply teeming with all sorts of female horrors. And if you want to stay in Beauley-"

Suddenly he stopped the car altogether. "Let's have a talk about this," he suggested rather breathlessly. "You want to stay in Beauley, and I want you to stay in Beauley. I doubt if you'll get in anywhere. Now think of the advantages of staying with us. Consider the question of economy. Every newspaper and every politician is yelling about the need for economy. Very well, then. If you come and stay with us-"

The girl uttered a laugh of real amusement. "Are your people in the habit of keeping open house to strangers?" she asked.

"Well, it's like this. I've been sent to the station to meet a freak I've never seen before. She was supposed to be going to know me by the beauty-spot over my left eye. Suppose I pretend I mistook-

"Pretend you mistook me for the freak?" "Well, look here," he babbled hastily, "suppose you were expecting to be met at the station, see, and we both thought the other was somebody else. See? And then I bring you in, and let my sister think——"

"But she'd see at a glance that you hadn't brought the right freak, wouldn't

she?"

"Yes, and then we'd have a good laugh over it, and you'd stay to tea, and I'd go out and look for rooms for you-and I swear I wouldn't find any—and ten to one they'd ask you to stay."

The girl began to laugh helplessly.

"You really are a most extraordinary person!" she exclaimed. "I like the idea of me, a stranger, entering into a conspiracy to force myself on the hospitality of people——"

"You've forgotten me!" he interrupted. "You'll be doing me no end of a good turn. Look here, it's like this. My married sister has asked down a perfectly poisonous girl. She was the one I was supposed to meet by the twelve-seventeen. According to my sister she's got a face like a bad nightmare, and I'm expected to sort of pair off with her! Well, if you were there, of course, I could—

"You could neglect her, I suppose?"

"Well-er-it sounds rotten I know, but a girl with a face like that ought to live in a cage and confine her social pleasures to masked balls. I'm not frightfully particular, but how would you enjoy having to be nice to magenta hair, green eyes, horse's teeth and a complexion like tomato soup with tapioca in it?"

She regarded him with an air of compas-

sionate interest.

"But how do you know she's like that? You haven't seen her."

"No-but my sister has-as they say in the French exercises."

"And she told you-"

"Oh, yes, she told me all that, and insists that she's charming. You see, I'm unlucky. I've got a humorist for a sister."

"I see!" said the girl, and suddenly

pursed her lips.

The Babe regarded her closely for a moment, and then made his final appeal.

"Now look here. Do listen. You're an awfully good sort or you wouldn't have stopped and cleaned my plugs for me. You've got a rough idea of being the Good Samaritan—why not do the thing properly and help me score off the family? You want a place to stay, and we'll put you up. Understand? I've rebelled, you see. Why shouldn't I invite my own friends, instead of having other people's friends invited for me? Now it's like this. I broke down on the road, and so I couldn't meet the—the freak at the station. You came along and put the old 'bus right for We recognised each other at once. We'd met in Town at one of the Stampners' dances, so I invited you to come and stay. What about it? My name's Eustace Hearn. If you'll only tell me yours——"

He paused and waited. She hesitated

and then smiled.

"Why, what an extraordinary thing!

My name's Hearn too."

"Cheers! I wonder if we're related. We'll find out about that later. But the main point is I met you at the Stampners', didn't I? Now what about coming along and meeting my sister? If you don't like her there won't be any harm done. In the immortal words of the poet—I forget which poet—wot abaht it?"

He was talking mostly for the sake of talking. In his wildest dreams he hardly hoped that she would say Yes. Yet he watched her anxiously, feeding a sickly hope. He was almost as mystified as he was surprised and delighted when she nodded her head as naturally as if his proposal were quite ordinary and conventional.

The Babe gave her no chance to change her mind. He sounded an ecstatic note on the horn and trod on the self-starter. Within five minutes the car was outside the front gate, and he was helping his fair

passenger to alight.

Mrs. Twingrove was sitting in the front garden. She advanced with a smile, quite half of which was intended for her brother.

"Hullo, Eileen! You found each other, then?" she said simply.

The Babe's jaw dropped.

"Yes," said his companion surprisingly, "I recognised him by the mole. He didn't know me, though, and I don't wonder, considering what you'd been telling him. It's lucky we found each other, especially as I came down by the earlier train and I'd already started to walk. You were a pig,

Molly, to tell him that I had green eyes and---"

The Babe, who had been listening hard, uttered a howl and turned and fled. Verily a sister who thought herself funny was hard to bear!

In the heat of the afternoon Eustace Hearn lounged, almost lay, in a deck-chair

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extended to its lowest rung. He heard light footfalls behind him on the lawn, but pretended not to. To be honest, the Babe was sulking.

Somebody came and stood behind him, waiting. He did not move. At last he heard a voice.

"Babe! I thought it was your job to amuse the freak?"

"Well, run off and be amused," he answered without stirring.

There was another pause.

"Babe, dear, aren't you going to forgive

"Yes, if you like. I don't mind. I hate women."

" Babe!"

"So I do. You recognised me at once and you might have had the decency to say who you were. You're just as bad as Molly."

"How could I say who I was, after you'd described me as such a painful fright?"

"Well, why did you say your name was Hearn. I do like truthful people?"

"Well, I had to. I couldn't think of another surname on the spur of the moment. At least, not one that would have sounded convincing."

The Babe grinned suddenly and slewed round in his chair.

"Well, perhaps you weren't far wrong after all," he grunted. "Your name might be Hearn some day—for all any of us know -mightn't it?"

L. MOULTON.

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#### WINTER BLOOM.

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IT is so dull, so drab, so cold," they say; With dismal shrugs they huddle by the fire. I sally forth in search of all that's gay; I must find Beauty or I should expire. A spirit wandering through the winter woods, Softly she goes among the sleeping things; Most subtle in her least obtrusive moods, About herself a baffling mist she flings. I seek her out and win a furtive smile; She tells me secrets that weave through the gloom A pattern mystic, wonderful, the while I gather sprigs and sprays of winter bloom; But in the house they stay--the stodgy ones-Nursing their gloom, longing for summer suns.



SOMETHING TOWARDS IT.

PETER: Can't I whistle fine, Mummy?

MOTHER: Yes, dear, you can do very well indeed. Can your little playmate whistle too? Peter (contemptuously): Whistle! No, he can only make the hole!

#### THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

#### ANOTHER LEGEND EXPLODED.

By Richard W. Bond.

"I MUST go soon," said Mollie, having consulted her watch. "I have an appointment with my hairdresser."

"How many times," I inquired with interest,

"has it been postponed?"

"What do you mean?" asked Mollie, frown-

ing slightly.

"Why," I explained, "surely one never visits the barber's den without having procrastinated for at least a week.'

"If," said Mollie severely, "you are contemplating trotting out some silly masculine witticism about a talkative barber, then please don't do it. It will not amuse me."

"Why?" I exclaimed, taken aback. "What

"Not only are such jokes silly," went on Mollie emphatically, "but they are untrue. You must remember that the inside of a barber's shop is no longer the mystery to women that it used to be."

"That is so," I admitted. "And, of course,

"You men," continued Mollie decisively, "have a very provoking habit of making a joke out of some half-truth, and then working it to death. The barber joke is only one of them. There are heaps of others."

"Oh," I said, being unable to think of any-

thing better to say.

"The plumber joke, for instance," went on Mollie, developing her theme. "Why, every humorous paper one picks up has a ridiculous joke in it about a plumber forgetting his tools and sending his mate back for them.

"Quite," I admitted. "But——"

"We had a plumber in at home only last week," pursued Mollie indignantly. "A perfect dear he was, too. He was only a day late in coming, and he brought all his tools with him first time. And he didn't bring a mate with him either.'

"Really?" I said politely.

"I don't deny," she went on, with the air of one who is determined to be scrupulously fair, "that the leak is almost as bad as ever. Still, he didn't have to go back for his tools."

"No," I said respectfully. "But--"

"And those fishing jokes," continued Mollie; "they're silly too. I know lots of anglers-Daddy's friends, you know-and I've never heard one of them ever boast about the size of his catch. In fact, they usually make funny remarks about all they ever catch is a cold, and things like that."

"Yes," I said humbly. "Still-"

"And the nervous-suitor-and-heavy-father joke," she went on with fine scorn. "That belongs definitely to the Victorian era, but you men still chuckle over variations of it. Why, everybody knows that the father is never consulted nowadays when his daughter decides to become engaged. He is simply told about it."

"Maybe," I said; "but---"

"And the one about the young lovers sitting up late and being disturbed by the girl's father is hopelessly out of date, too. Young people

he has hardly spoken a dozen words to me yet!"

I looked at her.

"No," I mused, reaching for the bill, "I don't suppose he has."



THE train drew up at a station and there was a long wait during which many of the passengers got up and craned their necks to see what was happening. At last a man carrying a heavy box climbed wearly aboard and deposited the box on the rack.



NOT ENTIRELY NEGATIVE.

SHE: She has no voice.

HE: No, but what a nerve!

don't stay at home in the evenings nowadays. They go to dances and night-clubs."

"Yes," I said meekly.

"It just proves," said Mollie, summing up, "the truth of the saying about there being nothing new under the sun. And even what is old," she added, somewhat obscurely, "is not necessarily true either. The barber joke, for instance."

"Well, you know," I began timidly, "there

really are---'

"So don't, please," said Mollie firmly, as she drew on her gloves, "make witty remarks to me about barbers being talkative. I might have believed it at one time, but I know better now. Why, I've been to my man scores of times, and

A nervous old gentleman eyed the huge package with evident distrust.

"Do you think that box is safe there?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes," replied the man cheerfully, "it's locked!"

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Mrs. Kat: Think you'll like your new neigh-

MRS. KITN: I don't know. I was out when their furniture arrived.

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TED: My new shoes hurt me to-night. Rose: Yes, they hurt me, too.

#### TALLY HO! By Jack House.

Ir Greyhound Racing continues to extend and Science becomes a handmaiden of Sport, what developments may take place! The ancient traditions of Fox-hunting, for example, would be quite revolutionised with the introduction of mechanical horses, hounds and foxes. When this comes to pass the old-fashioned hunting story will be revolutionised also and, instead of the heart-stirring romances we are used to, we shall read something like this.

The long white road rang gaily to the beat of many a hoof as the gallant concourse of brave men and fair women made its way to the Meet. The brightly polished chassis of each horse reflected the gleam of the sun and the colour of its rider's overalls. Everywhere was animation and move-A PASSIVE RESISTER. MOTHER (anxiously): Oh, Georgie, you really mustn't sneeze like that! Georgie (whose cold is developing): I can't help it, Mummie-it sneezes me!

ment, marred only by an occasional backfire or a faulty exhaust.

And there, in the centre of the fashionable throng, was Lady Gwendoline Gush sitting her 40 h.p. Rolls with consummate ease. About her were the young "bloods" of the Hedlington Hunt arrayed in their faultlessly creased dungarees, each hoping, as he drove his horse carefully in the crush, to win a glance from those bright eyes.

But Gwendoline's glances were reserved for one only of that band of beaux—Cyril Mal-de-Mer, younger son of the fourth Baron Doenutt. His superb horsemanship was the envy of his

comrades, and to see him change into third was to behold a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. His dashing Hava Banana Occasional Twenty curvetted and pranced proudly under his clever

"Curse that puppy!" muttered Ponto Mc-Poodle, a dark saturnine figure on a small Saucetin Seven. For Ponto knew that Gwendoline and Cyril were secretly betrothed and Ponto was one of the army of rejected suitors. But he

was determined to have his revenge. Only give him a moment with Cyril's carburettor and something would happen!

At length  $_{
m the}$ Hunt had fully mustered and bluff old Colonel Corkscrue, the popular M.F.H., took his place at the powerhouse in readiness to set off the fox. A touch upon the electric button and the quarry was released. It ran slowly at first, but as the current gained in power off it sped at a good 35 m.p.h.

Then the Colonel gave the "Tally Ho!", on the Klaxon affixed to his steed, there was the sound of a multitude of engines cranking and the hunt was up! The fleetlittle Morris hounds covered the ground rapidly and the cry of "Hark Ford!" was heard repeatedly.

The field soon widened out. Who was that ahead? Why, Cyril, of course! The charm of the chase was in his blood and, for the nonce, he had forgotten Gwendoline. She, poor girl, was in sore straits, for her engine was missing badly.

She drew up her steed in an adjacent meadow and prepared to overhaul it. She was not alone for long, however, for Ponto had purposely stayed behind. He drew in beside her and dismounted.

"Ha!" he snarled. "Proud girl, I have you now!"

Gwendoline drew herself up and glanced at him in utter scorn.

"Unhand me, villain!" she said haughtily. "Your darling hero is far away," he sneered.

"You are in my power."

Quick as thought Gwendoline darted to her horn and thumped out an "S.O.S." upon it. Miles away Cyril heard the call and, though almost on top of the fox, he sped in the direction and in a few minutes with superb insouciance, descended from his mount and hit Ponto over the head with his spanner.

Later on Gwendoline and Cyril were married by wireless and lived happily after.

A WELL-KNOWN author on leaving his house one morning forgot a letter he had intended to post. During the afternoon something recalled it to his mind, and as it was of considerable importance he hurried home.

The letter was nowhere to be found. He summoned the servant. "Have you seen anything of a letter of mine lying about?"

"Yes, sir.'

"Where is it?"

"Posted, sir."

"Posted! Why, there was no name or address on the envelope.'



THE INTERVAL

Son (on Christmas holiday home work): Father, what does it mean by the Mother tongue? FATHER: Hush, don't start her off!

#### SO LITTLE!

It takes so little to make me mad! Just a push at play, or losing a mark, Or if I call out and the others won't hark, Or a boy jumps out on me in the dark; Then I get in a rage and mother looks sad-It does take so little to make me mad!

It takes so little to please me though! Just a jolly game or a strawberry ice, Or a question I know without thinking twice. Or a treat that's extra, specially nice, Or big brother takes me out for a row It does take so little to please me, you know. Alicia Ellard.



LITTLE EMILY (visiting the farm): Uncle James, why does that pig wear a ring in her nose? Is she engaged?

"I know there wasn't, sir, but I thought it must be in answer to one of them anonymous letters you've been getting lately."



"I'm sorry to have to tell you, sir, that one

of your shirts is lost," said the laundryman.
"How's that?" inquired the customer. "I've just paid you for laundering it."

"You're right," replied the other man, "but we laundered it before we lost it."

WHITE: My wife is very busy. She's going to address a woman's club.

Whit: She's working on the address, I presume.

WHITE: No, the dress.

#### A BACKWOODS RENDEZVOUS. By Marna Denison.

The woman put on her hat and coat, opened the door at the back of the house and looked out into the night. The rain had ceased, though the night was still overcast. She could dimly see the outlines of the firs close to the house and the stretch of clearing, beyond which loomed the woods, the trees indistinguishable from one another in the gloom but together forming a thicker blur on the darkness.

"It's not so bad here," she muttered, "but it will be dark enough in the pinewoods. I'd better take a light." And, seizing a hurricane lamp from a peg in the wall, she litit and carried it into the living-room where on an open hearth blazed a huge log fire. This she stoked up

At the top of the hill she turned sharply to the right, along a path, quite invisible to anyone not entirely familiar with it, which ran through a jungle of young trees where a fire had raged some years before. She could picture to herself the open spaces, interspersed amongst these saplings, which at this time of year were glorious with the golden brown of the dying bracken.

Here it was a good deal lighter, but after five minutes' walking a thick, inky darkness fell suddenly upon her as the path plunged into the fragrant depths of the pinewoods and straightway ceased to be a path.

The woman never hesitated, but went straight on, following a trail blazed on the trunks of the trees—not that she did not know every foot of



REASSURING.

STOUT LADY: Are you quite sure the ice is safe this morning?
THE MAN: Bless you, mum, safe as 'ouses. I've got a good boat 'ook 'andy!

carefully with slow-burning wood, so that it should be safe while she was away, and picking up the lamp she went out through the front door.

The wind was cold and she shivered as she made her way along the so-called road (in reality little more than a track) which ran past the other few houses of the little settlement in which she lived.

On either side towered enormous pines whose ragged heads showed faintly between her and the sky, and beyond them on the right hand, she knew, lay the clearing around the school to which came pupils from far and near. Soon she left the settlement and the last gleam of light behind, and passed into still greater obscurity as the track rose sharply to breast a short hill, while the trees, birches now mingled with the pines, met and intertwined overhead.

the wood, but the trail avoided the majority of the roots which ran along the surface of the ground and constituted magnificent stumblingblocks for the unwary.

Emerging finally from the shelter of the pines, she found herself on a wide heather-clad expanse. Even in the dim light it revealed itself as a half-complete amphitheatre the sides of which, rising steeply, were outlined against the sky, and crowned by the dark, sentinel pines.

Straight across the plain she hurried, for she heard in the distance the rumble of the conveyance which was bringing her husband back from the City whither he had gone on business. Breaking into a run, she reached the appointed place just in time to see him alight from an upto-date electric train on the fastest suburban line in the world, within twenty-five minutes of London.

# SECURITY FOR THOSE YOU LOVE

A MAN had been listening to advice on life assurance.

"I'll go home," said he, and talk it over with my wife."

"Don't do that," said his adviser, "talk it over first with another fellow's widow."

Not a cheerful suggestion, perhaps, but life assurance deals with fundamental facts—

Company means that you will be saving money for your later years and also that your wife and family will be safeguarded should you pre-decease them. It costs little—but it means much. It will give you peace of mind—give them security.

For instance, if you are in your 30th year, an annual premium of £33 os. 10d. will insure your life for £1,000—plus bonus (the amount increases each year), and at the age of sixty you will become entitled to an immediate cheque for £1,660.

This example is based upon present-day bonus conditions.

#### THE PRUDENTIAL

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P.P.119

THE principal was proud of the way the pupils

were trained for fire drill.

One day he said: "Now, children, what would you do if I told you the building was on fire?"

A hundred children gave the answer.

A few days later a lecturer visited the school. The head master said: "Now, children, what would you do if I told you Dr. Dyke was going to lecture here to-day?"

They all answered: "We would rise promptly, put away our books, then quietly and without disorder file into the street.



Brown: Man, why don't you work? It won't kill you.

TRAMP: Don't kid yourself. I lost two wives that way.



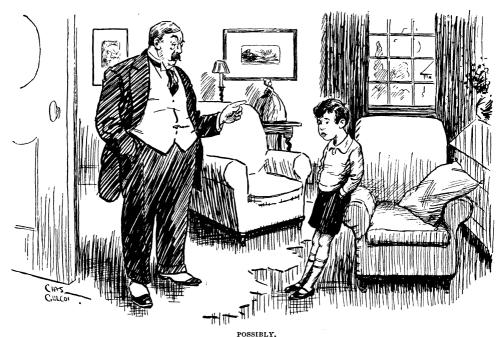
SALLY: Is Mary musical?

DORA: No, but she's always glad to sing if she's asked.



Mrs. Smith: What do I smell?

NEW COOK: The pie, ma'am! It's burning and I can't take it out for ten minutes.



FATHER: Everything I say to you goes in one ear and out of the other. Son: Is that what we have two ears for, father?

#### LOVE LAUGHS AT POETRY.

I talked to my love of a castle of splendour; I used all my fancy in making it fine, Then whispered: "Dear Mabel," in tones very tender, "If Fortune permit it, this castle is thine. Thine, thine through all seasons without intermission: Such regal magnificence seldom you see; But if you accept it, there's one small condition. Which is, that you graciously share it with me."

I thought that these words would transport her with pleasure;

I thought she would smile with an ecstasy true, But no! She looked cold, and I waited at leisure To hear her remarks on the vision I drew. "A castle," said she, "of the kind you depicted, Is frequently lacking in comforts, I fear, And if you possess it, on terms unrestricted,

Oh, do all you can to sub-let it, my dear!"

John Lea.

Patient: So you've really been practising since 1895?

DENTIST: If you don't believe it, just look over the magazines in the waiting-room.



JACKS: I hear your son is going to the

Jaxson: No, he's too lazy—he wants the dogs to come to him.



SHE: I've been married three times-and each time my husbands have been Williams. HE: I'll say you're a clever Bill collector.





## In days gone by -

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No. 398.

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The name is on the selvedge.

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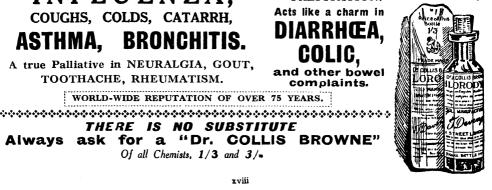
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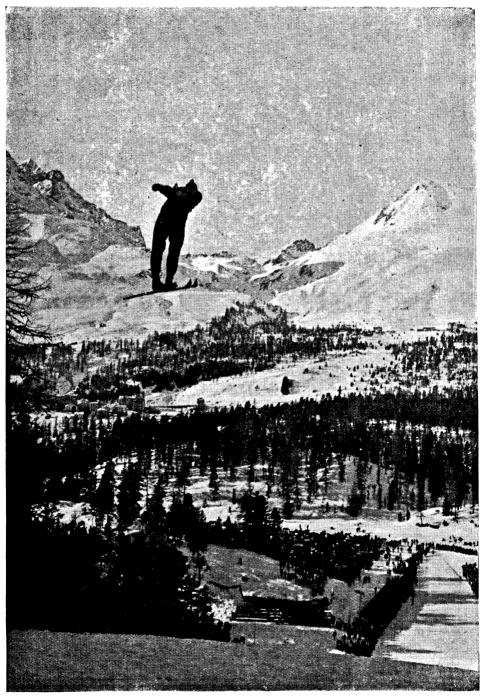
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"'Say, listen,' Mimi broke in sharply, 'you can cut that right out.'"

## THE DATCHLEY INHERITANCE

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE • DISAPPOINTED CYNIC •

#### By STEPHEN McKENNA

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

Г

"NOTWITHSTANDING anything to the contrary contained in my Will I GIVE DEVISE AND BEQUEATH all my real and personal estate to such grandson of mine as shall be the first to marry within twelve calendar months from the date of this Codicil and shall within that period legally adopt the surname of Datchley and shall within six months of his marriage give an Undertaking to reside at Datchley Castle for not less than six calendar months in each year after my death. If there shall be no such grandson then the provisions of my Will shall take effect."

Extract from the codicil to the last will and testament of John Datchley.

N the drawing-room of the "Pompadour Suite" at the Florida Hotel a young woman sat before a pile of photographs which one secretary blotted and another thrust into addressed envelopes as she signed them. A third was pasting news-cuttings into a loose-leaf album, while her dresser read aloud the daily lists of nerve-foods, face-creams, sedatives and stimulants without

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which—though she had in truth never tried them—she would professedly have been unable to support the strain of her calling.

"Sincerely, Mimi Westermayne," wrote, mechanically, as by now she did everything mechanically. Five years earlier she would have written "sincerely yours"; but America favoured the short form; and, when she decided to become a film-star, Mimi decided also that she must, mechanically, become American. When she played in Paris vaudeville, she had mechanically changed the "Margaret" inflicted on her by her god-parents for the more Bohemian "Mimi", as, before that, the "Wiggins" which she had inherited from her father had been mechanically buried under the more aristocratic "Westermayne". She had passed mechanically from London to Paris and from Paris to Hollywood, as the wheel to which her life was fixed mechanically rolled in a new direction. The direction was, mechanically, also that in which her husband rolled.

Her married life had indeed, Mimi reflected wistfully, been as mechanical a part of her career as everything else. When she took Joe for better or worse, he was writing additional "numbers" for The Broadway Girl and had promised to lift her out of the chorus with a song that should make her famous. The arrangement, Joe complained later, was worse for him and better for her inasmuch as The Lovelight in Your Eyes lifted her into the arms of one whose dread aspect in the stage-box caused choruses to sing a scared semi-tone sharp. Fred, when she married him after her first divorce, was controlling theatres in three capitals; and Mimi felt, until she met Tom, that they had been predestined for each other. Her mechanical progress had impelled her through the divorce-court a second time, however, before she learned from Harry that in western California the producers, not the scenario-writers, were "the worth-while guys"; and there was less of romance than of mechanical inevitability when, five months later, she left Harry for Giulio. Half her girl-friends at that season were -quite mechanically-marrying princes.

Of all her husbands, Giulio had taken most and, save in education, given least. At his hands Mimi learned that all Dagoes were brutes, that all men were fortune-hunters and that the Holy Roman Catholic Church was lamentably behind the times in its attitude to divorce. For the five weeks

that she had now been her own mistress, she had been wondering whether she dared risk her happiness again. Hitherto, when she married, it was almost always because she hated to say "no", or because some worldly friend whispered that it would do her no harm to be the wife of a big producer, or because she liked—as with Giulio—to be "in the movement". Her helplessness against men who were strong and silent, men who were weak and voluble, men who lived ruggedly in caves and men who hid a designing heart under an immaculate evening shirt, caused her to be victimized by each in turn. "It is one of the penalties of my position," she told an interviewer after one of her divorces, "that I can hardly hope to be loved for myself. And yet the actress is a woman before she is an actress . . ."

Accorded a suitable publicity, this sentiment inspired young Luke Abbotsford, hurrying to the Florida Hotel for an interview, to ask himself what possible objection there could be to his becoming her husband for the next few days or weeks. When he first wrote for an appointment, it was only to invoke her patronage for a charity-ball; but, if she yearned for romance and passion, he was ready to supply it. The big eyes and beguiling lips of her photographs in the illustrated papers argued neither intelligence nor strength. And the victim of so many disillusions should welcome a union that could be dissolved by either side at a prearranged signal.

"It can do no harm to have a shot," Luke decided. "If she's really had enough of marriage, I must try somewhere else. So long as I find a wife of some kind," he concluded with cynical impartiality, "I don't mind who she is."

While he waited for his name to be announced, he reflected that, if he played his cards carefully, this would be the last time that he would have to earn a month's salary by acting as secretary to a charity-committee. Three weeks ago John Datchley had, at long last, died; that afternoon the will had been expounded to his grandsons; and an estate of more than four million pounds was being offered to the one of them that married first.

"Not a word about how long one has to remain married," recalled Luke, who valued his freedom. "This young woman's average works out at seven months, but I'm sure she'd leave me sooner than that for a consideration. And we shall be scoring off the old man very neatly." The solicitor, that

afternoon, had prosed interminably about this mad or malevolent will that set brother against brother and urged all nine of them to make rash marriages for the sake of the money. "After starving your mothers," Mr. Plimsoll predicted, "he is trying to choke you with cream." Whatever strain of greed or meanness or cruelty any of them possessed would now be laid bare. old man's power for evil had not died with his death; his spirit would gloat over their disasters and disappointments. "It never occurred to Gaffer or to Plimsoll, for that matter, that there would be no heartburnings if we approached the problem in a business-like spirit," Luke mused. wonder what the fair Mimi is like . . ."

In the Pompadour suite a similar question was being asked by Miss Westermayne.

"Abbotsford? Oh, he's the guy who wrote about that ball," she recollected. "A plain 'Mister'? I don't want to get in wrong."

"There's nothing about him in Who's Who," answered her favourite secretary. "Would you like me to see him for you?"

"Oh, send him right in," Mimi Westermayne answered. "I can go on signing my fan mail while he says his piece. Is he young?"

"My age, I shouldn't wonder."

"Good-looking?"

"That's a matter of taste, I guess," answered the secretary with faint ill-humour.

"Call up the room-service for a couple of high-balls," Mimi commanded.

#### II.

For five minutes after her visitor had been admitted, she continued to sign her photographs without turning round. At length she raised her head to say:

"You've come with some spiel about this

hospital committee?"

"Ostensibly," Luke answered, "but what

I have to say is for your ears alone."

Mimi swung round at this unexpected opening and stared in surprise at the non-chalantly assured young man in the doorway.

"My secretary enjoys my complete con-

fidence," she answered.

If she kept the boy at hand, Mimi felt, he might observe and profit by the stranger's undeniable distinction of appearance and manner, though the training of a lifetime and the breeding of centuries were required to give that perfection of feature and colouring which—to her thinking—marked the "way-up English aristocrat" and which the English of all ranks were apt to dismiss contemptuously as the "barber's-block style of beauty".

"Fortunate youth," murmured Luke with bland patronage that sent a rush of angry blood to the secretary's head. "This is likely to be an unusual kind of interview, though. Before we reach the end, you will have seen for yourself that I could not conduct it in the presence of a third party. . . . I'm very much obliged to you, sir."

As the door closed behind her secretary's indignant back, Mimi looked up at her visitor with an expression of firmness that did not succeed wholly in disguising her apprehension of this undeniable "gogetter".

"If you're through with bulldozing my

stenographer . . . ," she began.

"I won't waste a moment!" Luke promised. "For that reason, I shall say nothing about this committee, which is only of importance in giving me this chance of meeting you . . ."

"Say, listen," Mimi broke in sharply,

"you can cut that right out."

As he had not been offered a chair, Luke had chosen one conveniently near hers and sat down with a smile that shewed his exquisitely white and regular teeth.

"Unfortunately — or fortunately — I can't," he replied. "You see, I've fallen in love with you. Now you understand why I had to get rid of that young man."

For a moment Mimi fumbled for the bell. It was lying beneath the litter of photographs; and, by the time she had found it, her visitor was spoiling her effect by offering to find it for her.

"Or I can tell the young man to come back," he volunteered. "I've said what I came to say and I shall only be wasting my time if I go on like this."

"And whether you're only wasting my time . . . ," she mimicked him in sudden

exasperation at his coolness.

"Î'm afraid that's the price you pay for being what you are," Luke smiled, offering her a cigarette. "Well . . ."

With a deep sigh and a deeper bow, he turned to the door.

"Are you beating it?" she exclaimed in astonishment.

Why he should stay, what she expected him to do, Mimi had no idea, but this ridiculous two-minute interview was disappointing her. Indefinably she felt that he had got the better of her.

"I promised not to waste a moment," he answered, bending to smell her roses. "After all, I've spoken to you, I've said it!"

In the silence that followed he feasted his

eyes on her.

"Would you like one of these photographs as a souvenir?" Mimi enquired indifferently. "That's me as Queen Eleanor in Love and Death."

"It's terribly kind of you, but there are thousands of people who would appreciate it more," Luke answered with a show of embarrassment. "To be frank, I detest films. And, if I must see them, I'd far rather see Gloria Swanson or Mary Pickford. I don't know whether you consider them better or worse than you are, but at least they don't get in the way of an ideal, because I have no ideal for them. You, though, whenever I see you playing a part..."

The easy flow of his discourse was interrupted by an inarticulate choke. White-faced and with blazing eyes, Mimi crossed the room and flung open the door.

"If you've done knocking the greatest artists in the greatest profession in the world," she panted, "you can duck out before you begin giving me the razz!"

"Whenever I see you playing a part," Luke continued tranquilly, as he followed her to the door, "I feel you're standing in front of the picture I've painted. 'Queen Eleanor'. 'Mimi Westermayne as Queen Eleanor'. What's that to me? It's Mimi the woman . . . I'm not interested in her as an actress, I don't care what parts she plays. Don't you ever want to escape and be yourself? An actress is a woman before she is an actress."

"Now don't you go pinch that! It's

mine," Mimi snapped.

Though the sentence belonged in truth to an interview written by a jaded pressman several hours before he met her, Mimi had employed it since with so much relish that it seemed to be her own.

"It's what you told one of the reporters at Southampton," Luke replied. "I was tremendously impressed. The applauding millions! And, in their midst, that lonely figure. They were applauding the actress; but I could only think of the woman. I pictured these people laying their titles and fortunes, their coronets and jewels at your feet; and, do you know? that made you

seem lonelier still. They were all worshipping Miss Westermayne for her beauty, her talent, her success. Did any of them worship you as 'Mimi', a woman, a wife, a mother?... I'll shut that door, if I may: the wind's blowing your papers about.... Tell me truthfully, Mimi, are you happier than I saw you in that picture? But, really, I have no right to ask you that! Good-bye! I was driven here by something stronger than myself..."

"If I were you, I wouldn't quit without throwing in that high-ball," Mimi recommended. "The way you Britishers pass up good Bourbong... I guess it's such a cinch getting it here, you don't value it ... Now I've forgotten what I was trying

to say!"

"It will come back," Luke assured her, "if you don't hurry it. What are you doing to-night? I should so much like you to dine with me."

#### III.

An hour later Luke was once more ushered into the drawing-room of the Pompadour suite. He had changed into an evening jacket and a black tie; and to Mimi, alert for the ready criticism of a "way-up aristocrat", he seemed faintly disconcerted when she appeared hung with pearls, in a barebacked orange dress. In one hand she was carrying the onyx cigarette-holder, in the other the black fan which she had made famous in *The Blood-Sucker*.

"If I'd known you were going to turn out like this, I'd have dolled myself up to match," said Luke, hardly attempting to hide his feeling that she was overdressed.

"Well, you didn't wise me up where you were throwing this party," protested Mimi.

"I ordered a table at the Diplomats'. The place is always three-parts empty till supper. Of course, if you'd prefer anywhere else . . ."

"Oh, I leave it to you. It sounds a bum

place, though."

"It is! I could take you to a dozen restaurants where every one would stare and whisper: 'There's Mimi Westermayne'. That's not the sort of thing you want, though. Nor I. I want to know about your life, Mimi: not the parts you've created or the dollars you've earned. I want to see the woman before she became an actress, the woman when she ceases to be an actress, the woman I somehow came to love under the actress and in spite of her..."

"You want to know a mouthful," Mimi interrupted with a touch of uneasiness.

Under the actress and in spite of Mimi Westermayne lay Miss Margaret Wiggins.

"Isn't it natural?," he enquired with a smile that disarmed her by its humility.

"I guess you got to loosen up first, if you want me to squeal," she answered cautiously.

"Anything I can tell you about my uninteresting life . . . ," said Luke.

As they drove from the Florida to the alley off Miguel Street in which the Diplomats' Club was housed in a sham-Elizabethan cellar, he let fall scraps of autobiography that were near enough to the truth to spare his imagination a strain without being true enough to appear sordid. From his artist-father he had, he explained. no doubt inherited his passion for beauty; to his mother, who had made a runaway match, he might perhaps trace his incurable sense of romance.

"I don't know whether the name of Datchley conveys anything to you?" he interrupted himself to ask.

Mimi knitted her delicately pencilled brows.

"There was some guff on the wireless about a Datchley as I came over," she answered. "Didn't he leave a whole lot of money?"

"Four million is supposed to be a conservative estimate," Luke answered carelessly. "Four million sterling," he added less carelessly. "He was my mother's father. She defied him and allowed herself to be cut off without a penny in order to marry my father. Rather fine, I think?"

"I'll say it is!" Mimi exclaimed.

"And, at the same time, so sensible. When she married my father with only the clothes she stood up in, she could at least be sure that he wasn't attracted by her money. I suppose that is partly what you mean when you want to be loved for yourself. You can never be quite sure of a man's motives unless he happens to be so rich that he couldn't possibly be tempted."

"And there aren't so many of them around," Mimi answered regretfully. "Not that I want you to think I'm rich like Mary or Gloria. That got my goat the last time I hit this burg," she grumbled. "A hundred dollars here, five hundred dollars there. The kikes and tightwads seemed to figure that I should fall for any kind of charitable hot-air they sprung me. That was two years ago; and between then and now I married Giulio. He was an expensive

dawg to keep, I'll tell the world. D'you know what that piker took off me before I

was quit of him?"

"I'm afraid money means nothing to me," Luke answered with faint boredom, tossing the driver of the taxi a pound note for a two-shilling fare. "No, no, I don't want any change!... Don't you hate touching a lot of dirty silver?" he enquired of Mimi fastidiously.

"If you had ever gone short on eats for want of it . . . ," she began with a rare lapse into sincerity and recollections of the

Wiggins household.

"We were brought up with different values," Luke interrupted thoughtfully. "The first thing in life was love. And the second. And the third . . ."

"You'd have been jazzed up and on your toes," jeered Mimi, "if that grandfather of yours had left his money to you!"

Luke gave her a surprised smile before leading her to the gloomy and deserted grill-

room of the Diplomats'.

"Funny you should say that!" he mur-"And to-day of all days! I spent part of this afternoon with my grandfather's solicitor. He was explaining the will. That four million, or whatever it is, I could get with rather less difficulty than I had in persuading you to dine with me to-night. Curious how a man turns completely round when he's in sight of death! My grandfather had quarrelled with all his relations, but he had an immense feeling for family, for the name. His heir will have to call himself Datchley . . ."

"But who is the heir i'' Mimi interrupted. "Well, I might be, if I chose," Luke "You see it wasn't mere words answered. when I said that money meant nothing to me. The whole way from the solicitor's office to your hotel I was asking myself what earthly good four or five millions would do me. I have a pittance already. Not even a millionaire can eat more than one dinner a day . . ."

"But you must be crazy! Twenty

million dollars . . ."

"There was a condition attached . . . " "For twenty million dollars I'd . . . I won't tell you what I'd do, fear I might

shock you. What was the condition?" "Well, there are several of us, several grandsons, I mean. The old man arranged that everything should go to the one of us who married first . . .'

"And you can stick around, taking their dust . . .?" Mimi shrieked.

"What else?"

"This is where I get off! Why, my sakes, if you had as much get-up-and-go in all your body as I have in my little finger, you'd be calling around at the lawyer's with your wife this minute. Twenty million dollars! You poor simp, if you stopped on the sidewalk and called out there was twenty million dollars, or ten, or five, or one . . ."

"But what good would that do?" Luke enquired patiently. "I couldn't marry a woman unless I were in love with her."

"You'd get your hooks on the dollars!"

"And if I happened to be in love with some one else?" Luke sighed. "Money would be a poor compensation."

"Oh, where do you get that stuff?"

Mimi groaned.

"I thought I made myself quite clear when I came to call on you this afternoon," Luke answered.

#### IV.

BEFORE she could speak, almost before she had taken in what he was saying, Mimi found herself being led by a bowing waiter to a table in a tunnelled archway.

Overhead, half concealed by Chinese lanterns, gleamed the circular glass-andiron trap through which, during the ages when the grill-room of the Diplomats' Club was still a cellar, coal had been punctually tipped by heavers employed for the purpose. Near the bottom of the chute and within a glass-case padlocked against the members there shone a Portrait of the Artist in Payment of his Supper, painted by a modern master equally famous and impecunious on either side of the Atlantic. Beyond it was an empty match-box tossed away by a Balkan prince to whom the club had extended the privileges of honorary membership.

Glancing reverently at these trophies, Mimi was constrained to feel that her surroundings, if funereal, were at least dis-

tinguished.

"You got a swell bunch of highrollers here," she whispered. Mr. Luke Abbotsford was evidently a young man of position as well as of means. His admiration of her was therefore disinterested. "When you called around this afternoon, I didn't know what to make of you," she confessed.

"It seemed so unlikely that any one should be in love with you?" Luke rallied

her.

"Well, I've had most kinds of guys falling for me one time or another, but they none of them had your fat nerve . . ."

"You mistake for arrogance what is in truth humility," Luke answered. "How could I expect you to take me seriously? It was preposterous!"

"Preposterous that you should fall in

love with me?"

"Preposterous that you should have any feeling for a total stranger. And, if you did come to care for me in time, it would be too late!," he laughed. "That's one of life's little ironies. I meet you like this, for the first time I have the chance of supporting a wife; and we're still strangers! By the time we've ceased to be strangers, I shall no longer have the chance of supporting a wife."

"One of the other guys will have jumped

your claim?"

"You may be sure they aren't letting the grass grow under their feet. I have a young brother who's engaged already. . . . They keep rather a good brand of melon here: shall we start with that?"

"I don't give a fat hoot for melon!" Mimi exclaimed impatiently. "Luke, you oughtn't to pass up that money. I call it right-down sinful . . ."

"But right-down unavoidable," he answered with a smile. "Of course, if I had

the audacity to ask you . . ."

"You got away with the audacity all right when you handed my poor steno-grapher the cold-boiled stare . . ."

"I had to tell you that I loved you! But to talk of marrying on an hour's acquaint-

ance . . ."

"How long did it take you to fall in love with me?" she demanded boldly. "Honest, now? I don't mind a bit of audacity. And you bet your life I can look after myself..."

"That's just what you can't do!" he interrupted with restrained passion. "I call your life a tragedy. That Italian brute who knocked you about . . . Oh, my dear, these things get known! The men who've married you for your looks or your money. The men you were too good-natured to refuse, though you never cared for them

"I cared for all my husbands at the time," said Mimi pensively. "Even Giulio. They seemed to change, though, once we were married."

"Men do," Luke answered grimly, "unless they marry for love. With me there's

no question of money. You must know I love you for yourself . . ."

"Well, you've said so," Mimi giggled,

"often enough."

"Do you think you could come in time to care for me?"

"I shouldn't wonder. I cared quite a bit for Joe, though he was a terror when he had drink inside him. I cared for Bert till he became jealous . . ."

"Will you marry me?"

"Well, it'll be something to talk about at dinner."

They were still discussing authenticated instances of love at first sight when an unhurried meal drew to its close. It was love at first sight and at a single encounter, Luke expounded, when Dante fell in love with Beatrice. The same thing, Mimi corroborated, had happened in Golden Grace: she had played "Grace" and it was on the strength of one meeting in the Subway, at the beginning of the first reel, that "Harley" had followed her across the Rockies and overtaken her in the ice-jam on the Yukon. The ill-starred passion of Héloise and Abelard, Luke recalled, was born-was it not ?—in the moment when Héloise, hearing Abelard discoursing, let fall her books and he picked them up for her. In The Lost World, said Mimi, "Prince Emanuel" walked out of his palace at the sound of the street-singer's voice and never returned. She had always wished that her song, when she played "Irene", could have been heard by the audience. . .

"I believe Landor fell in love with Rose Aylmer after one meeting," Luke continued.

"Well, if you take Giulio and me . . . But does it last?"

"You can't tell till you're married. And, if people recognized that, there'd be fewer unhappy marriages."

"There'd be mighty few marriages at

all!

"Marriages there will always be," Luke affirmed; "but, as we become more civilized, we shall contrive a painless way of ending the marriage that turns out a failure. I'm not jealous, I don't drink; but there may be something—a trick of speech, a difference of outlook—that would drive you to the verge of madness. Well, we needn't quarrel. If you felt obliged ever to say 'I want to divorce you,' that would have to be sufficient."

"And if you say: 'I want to divorce you'?"

"Mimi darling, is it conceivable? Of

course, if you want the same terms for both sides . . ."

"It seems fairer. Say, listen, have you figured where we shall be located if I do marry you? I only say 'if', Luke."

"I must spend half the year in Scotland, but you can live where you please. I shall provide for you suitably; and if for any reason the experiment is not the success we hope . : . I don't know what you would consider a proper settlement . . ."

"Shall we say 'fifty-fifty'?" asked

Mimi.

"Fifty . . . ? My dear, I think we'd better consult the solicitors. At present I don't know precisely . . ."

"Twenty million dollars was what you

said," Mimi reminded him.

"But I've no idea what Datchley costs to keep up. And there are the death duties . . . May I ask Mr. Plimsoll for an appointment? And may I tell him that you have promised to be my wife?"

"You may say we've discussed the subject," Mimi replied, stubbornly cautious. "If we can come to a satisfactory agree-

ment, you can count me in."

#### V.

LUKE signalled to a waiter and sent for ink and paper.

In a single evening not yet ended he had accomplished more than he had dared to hope as the result of a week's steady spadework. This self-centred young woman, with whose very features he had been unfamiliar until that afternoon, believed him to be one of the half-witted million who never missed a "Mimi Westermayne picture". Though, twelve hours earlier, he had intended only to secure her patronage for a charity ball, he had convinced her that he was in love with her and that he alone worshipped her with a single heart, neither dazzled by her prestige nor lured by the tales of her wealth and the fact of her beauty.

"There's no question about her being a lovely creature," he reflected with a last glance before beginning his letter. "If she had brains to match . . . But, then, no one with brains would have fallen for the stuff I've been handing her. On the other hand she has an eye to the main chance. Fifty-fifty, indeed! I should think a sweetener of ten or fifteen thousand . . ."

As he dated his letter, Luke wondered how much of married life he could endure in Mimi's company without falling to Prince Giulio's level of wife-beating. On five

occasions since six o'clock that evening, not counting the time when he had himself gratuitously dragged the phrase in, he had heard that an actress was a woman before she was an actress. How often, he wondered, had Giulio submitted to that before flinging himself upon her with a scream? The countrymen of Mussolini could act with decision when required.

" Dear Mr. Plimsoll," he began.

``Sinceleaving you this afternoon

Then he paused, as a hand was laid on his shoulder, and he looked up to see his young brother Brvan.

"Hullo! You all by vourself?" Luke enquired. "I want you to meet a great friend of mine . . ."

"I'm afraid I can't stop ...," Bryan began in a whisper.

"What's the hurry?

You aren't going to tell me you've got married since we parted this afternoon?"

"Well, there's not been much time . . ."

"For a siege, no; for a flying assault, yes. When we left Plimsoll's office, I had never set eyes on the ravishing creature behind you. Now . . .

"You're ragging!" Bryan whispered in dismay, turning involuntarily to study his brother's companion, who was reddening her lips with a professional sureness of touch.

"It's quite easy to find a wife," Luke returned, "if you don't confuse business with sentiment. I told you that, if Phyllida had the bad taste to flout me at luncheon,

I could always propose to Chloe at dinner. Talking of business, I'm writing to tell Plimsoll. If you could take the young woman off my hands for a few minutes . . . Mimi, I want to introduce the young brother I was telling you about . . .

"Pleased to meet you," said Mimi with the conventional graciousness of her adopted

nation.



"You are . . . Miss Mimi Westermayne?" Bryan gasped.

"That's my acting name. Your brother ... But perhaps I didn't ought to tell you."

"Then it is true!" Bryan caught the back of a chair to steady himself, then turned to the door. "But this is fantastic!"

"Manners, manners!" Luke called after him. "You must forgive my brother's want of ceremony: he is naturally disappointed, Mimi. . . . Now, this is what I'm saying to the solicitor. I want him to arrange for a special licence and to draw the marriage-settlement in the usual form . . . "

"The usual form?" Mimi repeated

suspiciously.

"With this exception: if for any reason the marriage is not a success . . .

we could part friends, with a smile and a shake of the hand . . ."

"You wouldn't miss me much if you could let me go with a smile," pouted Mimi.

Luke bit his tongue at the unhappily

debonair phrase.

"I should hate there to be any bitterness," he explained lamely. "If you're not tied . . ."



"You do keep on about that! I suppose you think I've been spoilt . . . ," Mimi interrupted with asperity. "Or else I'm not your sort," she continued, with a resentful glance towards the door through which Bryan had precipitated himself.

"I only want to protect you! Your experience of marriage has not been a happy one. If we felt that, whatever happened,

"I divorced the others," interrupted Mimi with a touch of pride. "I could always divorce you."

Luke hastened to seize his opportunity:

"And Mr. Plimsoll must secure that the provision I make for you is not upset by a divorce . . ."

"So you're betting on that as the finish? I wonder you want to marry me . . ."

"I've told you! I love you."

"You're sure you don't want to buck around as Mimi Westermayne's husband?"

Luke wiped his pen and laid it down, collected his letter and envelope and tore them up. To be Mimi Westermayne's husband was a degradation which a man might have to face from motives of policy; to boast about it would be an indecency.

"If you could only realize how poorly I think of films and film-actors and filmfanatics," he began with frozen venom. "Their cheapness and crudity, the inanc cult of the tenth-rate inane . . . It is only," he added in quick recovery, "when one meets the exception, the shining genius . . ."

"Meaning me?" enquired Mimi.

"Need you ask?"

"Well, I reckon I do if you're going to shoot off your mouth this kind of way whenever I mention my art. We shall quarrel for sure. I'm generally noted for the sweetness of my temper. Ask any of the men I've married! But I just wouldn't stand for it if you thought I was spoilt or conceited." Once set in motion, she seemed unable to stop. "Nothing I do is right! You as good as said I was dressed up like a plush horse. You 'abhor the films'! You aren't interested when I tell you the parts I've played. I didn't ask you to marry me! If you want to smile and part friends, now is the time to do it."

As she stood up, with a majesty borrowed from her own rendering of 'Lady Perdita' in Hearts and Coronets, Luke caught her by the wrist.

"What are you playing at?" he demanded fiercely.

"I'm not playing at anything!"

"A woman is an actress before she is a woman," he sneered. "As you told me this afternoon, you can cut this right out."

"If you don't let go, I'll scream!"

Luke let fall her wrist and poured her out a glass of wine.

"Drink this!" he whispered. "I'm sorry, Mimi. When a man's in love for the first time . . ."

"Are you making out you're in love with me? In love when you say: 'I must spend half the year in Scotland, but you can live where you please'? You poor fish, you've never been in love with any one but yourself."

"Then why do you imagine I want to

marry you?"

"Because you think I'm still worth your

while, even after Giulio. I'm good for big money, you say . . ."

"If you married me, you'd have more in five minutes than you could make in five years. Come round to Plimsoll's office tomorrow . . ."

"And find out how soon after the 'proper' settlement we can have a divorce?"

"You won't understand that I'm leaving you a way out."

"If you loved me for myself, you wouldn't

think of ways out."

"If I didn't love you, why should I want

to marry you?!"

"Oh, the grandfather story may be true. If you could be married for a week or two . . ."

Luke abandoned finesse and played his ace of trumps defiantly:

"It's four millions, at a conservative estimate."

"Nothing doing."

There was such finality in her tone that for several moments he could say nothing. As he helped her into her cloak and saw her wincing as though his fingers had grazed an open wound, his natural kindliness reasserted itself:

"Well, we can still shake hands and . smile, I suppose?"

"I don't feel much like smiling," Mimi answered sombrely.

"If you won't part friends, why not remain friends?"

"With you?" "Why not?"

Before she could answer, Mimi swallowed hard. To his amazement and dismay, Luke saw a tear quivering on the lashes of the eyes which he had thought vacant.

"Because you done something I didn't think any man could," she answered. "Giulio was a slob; and Bert was a galoot with his jealousy; and Joe was a terror when he had drink inside him. I had a bad time with them and with the others. I came to feel that all men were just mutts who fell for my face, or crazy boys who were wild about my acting, or lizards who were out for what they could get from me. I didn't think any one would ever love me for myself, except maybe my little stenographer. He's a peach! And then you ... The others will have to hand it to you, Mr. Luke Abbotsford: you're the only one that's managed to hurt me. May I have a taxi?"

"You'll let me see you home, won't you?"

"Aren't you going to try some place else, as you've fallen down on me?"

Luke sought to cover his chagrin by staring thoughtfully at his watch.

"It's a bit late to do anything more tonight," he murmured.

"You could mail her some flowers," Mimi sneered.

"The shops will all be shut. And I don't yet know where she lives."

"Do you yet know who she is?"

"Her Christian name is Chloe," he replied stiffly.

As he pronounced the fictitious name, Luke saw Mimi wincing again; and for the first time that evening he realized that, with all her vulgarity and egoism, she had given him no cause to hurt her. In a cynic's hearing, "to be loved for oneself" was so ridiculous an aspiration that he could not imagine any one's entertaining it seriously. Yet "Phyllida" had. And "Chloe" might prove another "Phyllida".

Luke was disappointed to find that his cynicism was hardly wide enough to embrace a woman like Mimi Westermayne; and, though he talked of visiting "Chloe", he knew that he would not pluck up courage until he had forgotten the tears on this beautiful and wholly foolish young woman's lashes. There was something in old Plimsoll's warning that Gaffer Datchley's power for evil had not died with him.

He roused to find Mimi addressing him: "Did you say Chloe? I know all about her!"

"That is more than I can boast," Luke muttered. "To know all about any woman . . . ," he added.

"Well, I know all that matters," Mimi broke in triumphantly.

"To her? Or to me?"

"To both of you: she wants a husband, not a thing that's fallen in love with its own reflection. She's not going to marry you! Believe you me!"

Hereafter follows The Adventure of the Poor Man Spoiled.

### THE IRISH WIND.

SWEET is the Irish wind By the bog water, Calls to a breast that's kind, Her son, her daughter,

Soft as a dew-wet rose Wild and caressing Kisses she softly blows Nor tires of kissing.

Silver the wild soft rain From the dim mountains, Calls the child home again, Troubles the fountains.

Lovely her winds and rain
And the washed skies of her,
Draws the heart home again
To the grey eyes of her.

Heigh-ho, her beauties call
And they must come to her,
Running like children small,
Wild to come home to her,
KATHARINE TYNAN.

### AND SOME TO WIN **THEM** 0 0

## B<sub>v</sub> ARTHUR MILLS

#### ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT HOLIDAY 0

AROLD awoke to find the man had placed his early tea beside him and drawn the curtains, letting in the light of a grey, cheerless morning. He drew the bed-clothes more closely about him, turned on his side and watched the man putting out his hunting things.

The sight gave Harold no special pleasure, for he had never really cared for hunting; however, having been born in a county where those who did not hunt did not have their existence acknowledged, he had kept his shameful secret to himself.

"What is it like out?" he asked.

"Raw, sir, and it is raining; looks as

though it might turn to snow.

"Ough!" Harold stretched out his hand toward the tea. "Put those boots by the fire."

"Very good, sir. What coat will you

"My black, of course," said Harold irritably. Who would want to wear a pink coat on such a pouring wet day? He could appreciate now the feelings of the man in the condemned cell being asked what he would like for breakfast.

"No, don't put out my leathers; if they

get wet they'll freeze on me."

What an idiot the man was. Harold looked out of the window. The wind had veered round slightly and the rain was lashing the glass. What fools folk were who went fox-hunting in such weather. But they would go of course; they would go to the meet if there was enough rain falling to start another flood. Ugh! Harold poured out the rest of his tea.

"Breakfast is at nine, sir," said the man as he withdrew.

Half an hour later Harold walked with a briskness he was far from feeling into the dining-room. The others were already down

-Sir George Barrett, his daughter Ursula, and a lean, red-faced fellow, a Captain Blair, who had sent his horses on overnight and motored over that morning. There had been a good deal of talk about this fellow Blair at dinner—Bob they called him. He was apparently a sort of uncrowned king in the hunting field in those parts; nothing he would not put a horse at; rails, walls, brooks: all came alike to him when hounds were running. Ursula had made no secret of her admiration for Bob Blair; best man to hounds she had ever seen, she said.

Harold offered a limp hand to Blair which, the latter squeezed aggressively, at the same time looking him as straight in the eyes as a boxer looks at his opponent when they first

meet in the ring.

"Well, I haven't done him any harm," thought Harold, putting his hand, with fingers that felt like pressed figs, into his pocket.

He did not know that Ursula, before he came down, had been slyly implying to Blair that he was going to meet his match in the hunting field that day.

"The porridge is on the sideboard," said

Sir George.

Harold got some porridge.

"I'm sending you out on a grey horse," said Sir George; "want you to tell me what you think of him; only got him last week and he hasn't been out yet; my man says he pulls a bit, but will jump anything."

"Pulls, does he?" asked Harold uneasily. "Not really; at least he is all right if he is up in front; but he goes mad if he is

behind anybody."

"Well, he'll be fresh, anyway," said rsula; "he hasn't had a hunt for a fort-Ursula;

Harold walked to the side table and put

down his porridge half finished. As he lifted the lid from a dish of kidneys and bacon, he looked longingly at the whisky decanter. He now understood why steeple-chase jockeys liked a drop of something before going down to the post.

Breakfast over, they got in the car, Ursula squeezing down between Harold and Bob Blair. As they squelched along the muddy country road, with the rain lashing the windows of the car, Harold's stock of self-esteem dropped down to zero. He felt himself to be one of the most miserable mortals on earth and wished for the thousandth time that he had never left his comfortable chambers in the Temple.

It was all Ursula's fault. They had met in London at a dance; that had been in the spring; throughout the spring and summer they had got on very well together, for if Harold was not fond of hunting he could talk about it, and Ursula liked a man to be a sportsman as well as to be able to dance and talk about pictures and books. So Harold in the intervals of dancing with Ursula and taking her to see plays and art galleries, bewailed the fact that he could no longer hunt. He had to work now, he said; he couldn't afford to keep horses; he would miss the hunting; it was the one thing he used to live for.

This was in the summer. Then winter came and he had his hand called.

Ursula invited him to come and stay at Long Lacey and hunt. He could not get out of it; he had no work to do on Saturdays; Ursula said her father would mount him; there was nothing for it but to go or for ever after hold his peace on the subject of horse and hound, and this, he knew, would mean losing Ursula, who made no secret of the fact that she liked a man to be a sportsman.

Now here he was in this wretched car being taken to the meet, sitting beside a bright, healthy English girl who would judge him by the way he went.

It was not his fault he did not like hunting; it was the way he had been brought up by a tough old uncle. Left to himself, Harold always thought he might have taken to hunting quite willingly. But being made to hunt whether he wanted to or not, often on horses that weren't fit to ride, and getting a series of spills culminating in being thrown by a raw four-year-old on his head on a tarmac road, had destroyed that most sensitive of things, a hunting man's nerve; in fact, Harold's nerve had never been given

a chance to develop; it had been killed in its infancy.

But there was no good explaining this to Ursula. She might pretend to sympathise with him, but in her heart she would judge him with the harshness of youth to youth and look to the fittest to survive, as, for example, this fellow Bob Blair. In any case, after talking all the summer about the delights of hunting, it was a bit late to say on the way to the meet you wished yourself anywhere except on the back of a horse. Well, at any rate, the weather was so appalling it was very possible there would be no scent.

However, when they got to the place where their horses were to meet them, the rain had lifted. Harold saw the grey, a great raking horse that looked as full of oats as a pod of peas. He clambered up, bidding the strapper keep a good hold of the reins as he did so.

"Give him his head, sir, and you won't have any trouble with him," said the strapper, who saw that Harold looked far from comfortable.

Ursula and Bob Blair had now also mounted, and the three turned from the road to cross a couple of fields to the place where hounds were meeting. Blair was riding a black horse, a big strong-looking animal like the grey, but, thought Harold, enviously, infinitely quieter. The grey started giving trouble as soon as they got on the grass, lifting his hind legs in a couple of quick disconcerting kicks. Harold just managed to remain in the saddle.

"What you want is a good gallop, old man," said Ursula, looking at the grey.

She herself was riding a little thoroughbred chesnut, beautifully mannered. All very well for her to talk, thought Harold, but it was no joke for him. He believed what the grey really wanted to do was to throw him and jump on his face.

"By Jove, that would make one think," said Blair, pointing to a fence along which they were riding.

Harold looked at the fence and shuddered inwardly; it was black and thick and strong throughout; the sort of fence that you either cleared or fell at; not a weak place anywhere.

"Would you jump that if hounds were running?" Ursula asked him.

"Suppose I'd have to," Harold answered as coolly as he could, though inwardly resolved that nothing would induce him to.

They reached the meet and Harold man-

ceuvred the grey, whose manners grew worse instead of better at the sight of hounds, to the outskirts of the crowd. Here he stayed for several uncomfortable minutes while the grey did an impromptu step dance; he longed to give the brute a good welt with his crop, but did not dare to.

At last hounds moved off. Harold dropped into a place at the tail end of the procession. He observed Ursula and Bob Blair riding right up behind hounds and mentally wished them the good start they sought. All he wanted was obscurity; this, as there was a fair-sized field out, he hoped to obtain.

The first draw, a spinney, held nothing and the field jogged on to some gorse.

Harold had now got some sort of control over the grey, and was watching hounds work the gorse when Ursula came up.

"Wonder if they will find; if they do and he breaks that way, there is our fence—you remember the one we all said we'd have to jump if hounds were running."

Harold looked and saw the fence; it appeared bigger and blacker than ever.

"Oh yes, that'll be a lark," he said, devoutly hoping hounds would run in the opposite direction.

Just then a whimper stilled all further talk. The pair sat motionless. Even the grey seemed to know that if he kept still he'd get the work he wanted. Another hound spoke and another. Ursula put her hand on Harold's arm.

"Look!" she whispered.

Harold looked and saw what others saw: a red-brown shape loping down a hedge-row. That sight filled every other heart with joy. But Harold—well, Harold saw that the fox was making straight for the big black fence which he and Ursula and Bob Blair had all agreed to jump if occasion offered.

Now hounds were clear of the gorse and racing to a grand chorus straight for the big black fence. The more eager followers already had their horses on the move.

"Give them time, gentlemen; give them time. A-r-r! there! hold hard, will you! how can hounds hunt if you're riding right on top of them!" This was to Bob Blair, who had crammed his hat on to his head and was galloping straight for the fence.

Harold had needed no cautioning. He had the grey short by the head and was looking about him furtively. There must be some way out of the field except over that nasty-looking obstacle. There was. In the far corner he espied a gate. Praise be to all

farmers who equipped their land with gates!

Now hounds were clear and the field in motion. Bob Blair, who had pulled his horse back sharp on to his haunches at the Master's orders, was slightly in front and once more set the black at the fence.

"Now for it," Ursula called gaily to

Harold.

Side by side they galloped forward. For most men a great moment to be riding alongside the girl they love at the beginning of a fast hunt; for Harold just pure torment. The field was long and the fence lay a full three hundred yards from them. As they pounded along he grew aware that only a few were making for that fence, the majority

—the sensible majority, he thought—were galloping left-handed to the gate. All the soul in him longed to go for the gate too.

But there Ursula. was Her cheeks whipped rosy. with the wind: her eyes alight with excitement; her pretty lips set tight; she was riding straight as an arrow for that fence. He could not let take it



alone after what he had said; he couldn't ... at least he ... oh, the fence looked bigger ... than ... ever.

Scarcely consciously Harold's left rein grew taut and right rein slackened. He felt the grey shake his head impatiently, as much as to say, "Leave me alone when I'm hunting, will you!" He saw Ursula drawing ahead of him. He saw another figure still further in front, a figure on a black horse with hat crammed over ears—riding hard and straight. He saw the horse rise in the air; then disappear. So Bob Blair was down. On the other side the place was probably far worse than they had seen. Then next thing he knew was the grey had his head screwed round and mouth agape as

the full weight of the left rein came on his jaw, turning him from the fence towards the gate.

Harold went through that gate with others who had thought discretion the better part of valour. He had a goodly company with him, for in every hunt it is only the chosen few that take their fences straight. He was able to follow hounds in a fashion, waiting his turn at gaps, jostling and pushing at gates, galloping to make up leeway over plough and furrow. But though to all appearances he was seeing as much of the

"Perfectly," said Harold:

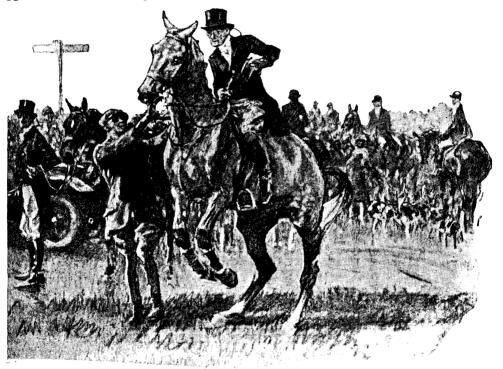
"Timber is what he likes," she continued.

"More than this one does," said Blair, looking down at his black horse; "can't make him have it unless he's got a lead."

As they spoke, hounds again hit the line and the field once more surged forward.

Blair looked about him with the quick expert eye of a man who always takes his own line.

"I think left-handed is the best way," he said to Ursula; "they'll make for Little Common."



"'Give him his head, sir, and you won't have any trouble with him."

hunt as most, the day held no joy for him, and he was hating himself as only a man can hate himself whose nerve has failed in a crucial test.

Presently hounds checked and he found himself beside Ursula and Bob Blair. Blair's hat was broken, his shoulder and the side of his face were smeared with mud, but there was a grin on his face and a twinkle in his eyes as he looked at Harold.

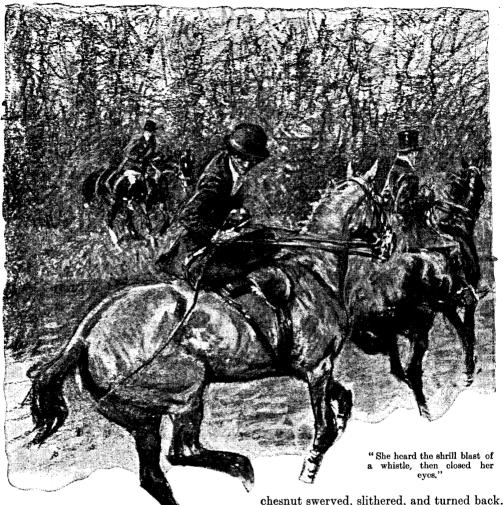
"Pretty stiff bit of country that," Blair remarked.

"Yes . . . very," agreed Harold, who had jumped nothing bigger than a broken rail.

"Does he jump all right?" asked Ursula, looking at the grey.

Left-handed a low fence enclosed the field. Ursula and Bob Blair headed their horses in this direction. So did Harold. Whatever happened he was determined to ride with them; no more following with the ruck through gates and gaps.

They cleared the little fence, and as Harold felt the grey rise under him he knew he was on a splendid horse. Now riding in a line they raced across a broad belt of pasture. Watching, Harold saw Blair had been right. Hounds had swung left-handed; they were in the field in front racing to a grand head, evidently there was a tearing scent and it was not a moment for anyone, who wished to live with hounds, to hesitate.



Next thing he knew was a muttered exclamation from Bob Blair, and now he became aware that between hounds and themselves there was as stiff a looking set of posts and rails as you could wish to see. Harold remembered Blair saying that the black horse did not like timber. He knew his job was to press ahead and give a lead. But once more the fatal spirit moved within him. Those rails looked singularly green; one could take an appalling fall over timber. Instead of his knees closing on the saddle, his hands tightened on the reins, and next moment he had dropped behind and was sawing at the grey's mouth.

Ursula rode straight on, holding the little chesnut firmly at the rails. But to no purpose; a few feet from the obstacle the

chesnut swerved, slithered, and turned back. Blair set the black at the place. The black refused.

Meanwhile hounds were gaining ground and they were hopelessly shut in.

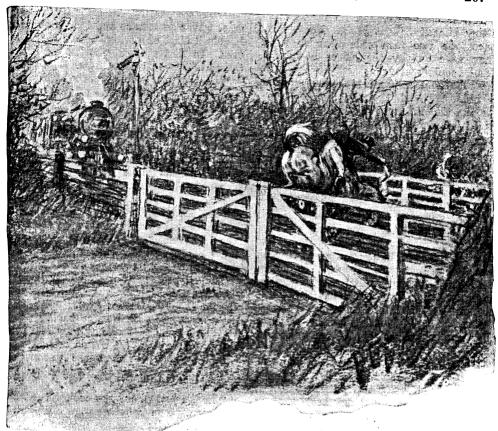
"Give us a lead, will you," said Bob Blair to Harold.

Harold had brought the grey to a standstill. He was sitting inactive, just watching the other two; his very faculties of motion seemed paralysed. Now, at the request, he stared blankly at the rails, which seemed to have become the size of scaffolding.

"That grey will jump them," said Ursula.
"We've got to get over or get thrown

out," Bob Blair urged.
"I..." Harold began, then stopped.

Blair gave him one keen look, then said gruffly: "All right. If you won't, I will." Taking the black short by the head he crammed him at the rails, holding the horse up so hard that he had no option but to jump



or fall. The black half rose, caught the top rail squarely with his breast-bone, splintered it, and fell on his nose the other side.

It was easy now for Ursula and Harold to follow through the gap made by the broken rail.

As they helped Bob Blair to get up again, Harold felt his humiliation had reached its lowest level. Foolishly, instead of holding his tongue, he tried to justify himself.

"I'd have tried that only I was afraid of hurting the horse . . . he, he isn't mine."

"Hurting the horse!" Blair looked at Harold in a manner that plainly implied he thought the only thing Harold was afraid of hurting was himself.

It was a sneer—unmistakable and hard to stand—but what answer could Harold give?

Worse was to follow. Ursula's eyes swept Harold in a brief glance—cool, contemptuous. "Come on," she said to Blair, and before she was out of earshot she added—and Harold knew she meant him to overhear her

words, "I never saw such a funk in my life."

Now there is an old saying that even a
worm will turn if you tread on him enough.

A curious transformation took place in the mind of Harold. He had been sneered at by his rival; called a coward by the girl he loved. Suddenly the whole atmosphere became charged with a colour he had not seen for many moons; it was a bright, vermilion red.

Gathering the grey, he rode after that pair as though a fiend possessed him. There was a fence in front, low to the left, high immediately in front. Bob Blair and Ursula were making for the easy part, for there was no point in taking more out of their horses than they need. Harold held straight on his line. He took the fence at its highest point, caring nothing for what lay on the other side. The grey seemed to appreciate the confidence put in him; he was being ridden now as he liked to be ridden. He flung himself at the fence, bold as a lion. Looking down, Harold was dimly conscious of a yawning ditch beneath. He felt the grey literally stretching in the air to clear; and then they landed with just an inch or two to spare.

Now the fun began in earnest. Harold had drawn level with Bob Blair. The latter,

ever a jealous rider, had no intention of letting himself be cut down. For several fences the two men rode neck to neck. They were out by themselves now, with Ursula coming along as well as the little chesnut would let her, a full hundred yards behind.

From this distance she watched the pair ride and it seemed to her, as she looked on, that one at least of them had become possessed. Never had she seen a horse asked to jump such things as the obstacles at which Harold set the grey. He took a stone wall at its highest point—not quietly as he should have done-but going all out as they take their fences in the Grand National, which may be all right for horses specially so trained, but on an ordinary hunter is courting trouble; he jumped a yawning ox fence, when there was an open gate just to the left, through which Bob Blair rode, for he was there to live with hounds and saw no point in such senseless riding.

Once, at a brief check, Ursula caught a glimpse of Harold's face; it was white and tight-set. Once before she had seen that look on a man's face. And now, in a moment of ghastly inspiration, she knew the truth. Harold was riding, if not purposely to kill himself, at least without any heed whether he killed himself or not. And she knew too that it was her doing; that her taunt, which he was meant to overhear, had driven him to this state.

Then hounds moved on again, the mad race continued, and a field or two later Ursula saw a sight that drove all other thoughts from her mind.

Straight in front a signal-box and telegraph posts showed where a railway ran. The fox must have crossed the line, for hounds were racing straight for two white gates that marked a level crossing. She saw hounds fling themselves through the gates and cross the line. She saw one of the figures ahead check; it was the one in scarlet, Bob Blair. She saw that Harold rode on alone; then with sickening vividness that the signal arm was down.

At all hours of the day and night expresses raced along that line. But it was too late now to shout. Harold had the grey firmly collected and was setting him at the first of the double railway gates. At the same moment round a bend of the wood a train came roaring down the line.

Ursula saw the grey rise gallantly, clear the gate, waver an instant and fall. She heard the shrill blast of a whistle, then closed her eyes. In that moment she felt exactly as though she were a murderess.

When she opened her eyes the train was at a standstill. Bob Blair was off his horse and clambering through the nearest carriage. Somewhere, either on the other side of the train or beneath it, were Harold and the grey horse.

It would be perhaps more fitting here to say that Ursula fainted. But this would not be true. She was a British girl and could rise to an emergency. Quick as lightning she galloped to the gate, flung herself off her horse and clambered through the train. There on the other side in a ditch lay Harold and the grey, all the wind knocked out of the horse and the senses from the man.

She slipped her arm under Harold's shoulder, sent Blair for water, and waited till Harold should open his eyes.

Presently Bob Blair came back.

"What on earth made him try and jump those railway gates?" Ursula asked.

Blair looked down at the unconscious man; his eyes were alight with admiration

"That's just about the coolest card I've ever seen. You know we were riding along neck and neck; when we came to those railway gates, I shouted to him to stop. I don't know if he heard or if he didn't understand. Anyway, he just turned in his saddle and shouted: 'All right, I know your horse doesn't like timber; I'll give you a lead.'"

At this moment Harold opened his eyes and looked about him muzzily.

"By George," he murmured. "I believe I'm going to like hunting after all."

And this, as the story is chiefly concerned with whether Harold would ever get his nerve back, is really the end.

To those who do not see the point of this little tale I would commend the words of that great authority on hunting—John Jorrocks, M.F.H.:

"How warious are the motives that draw men to the kiver side," said Mr. J. "Some come to see, others to be seen; some for the ride out, others for the ride home; some for happetites, some for 'ealth, some to get away from their wives," and (he might have added) some few to win them.



# A PACKET OF • COLORADOS •

### By E. TEMPLE THURSTON

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

JILL MOSSOP'S capacity for life was only equalled by her abounding ignorance of it. She believed the world was divided by a partly divine and partly mechanical contrivance into good and bad. She also believed in that shrewd perception which can unerringly distinguish one from the other. This, she took it for granted, she possessed. And lastly, she entertained a wholesome conviction that the good must inevitably, if she had patience, come her way.

Not a few young women have cherished these beliefs and, in order to meet disappointment without despair, have called them—romance. It is a wholesome name, but needs all the thirty bites of the doctor's advice for the consumption of food before it should be swallowed.

Jill Mossop was at that stage of life where she bolted her food. This merely showed her ignorance of it but did not preclude or interfere with her appetite for more.

Appetite is a common instinct. It is not the peculiar possession of those who are acquainted with the delicacy of caviare. The fact that Jill Mossop's father kept a tobacco shop in the High Street made her no different in this respect of life from those ladies who keep hat shops in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square. She was just as anxious to sell a popular brand of cigarette as they are to supplement their already substantial incomes with the proceeds of

the latest fashions in hats. Only doing it for her own and her father's living, she did it with less disdain, with less contempt for the tradesman's calling.

Mr. Mossop knew what he was about when he left Jill to look after the shop and went to play snooker in the billiard saloon opposite. He reckoned that, general as the taste in tobacco has become, it is still the male sex that constitutes the regular customer. Regarding his daughter therefore with an approving eye and no little appreciation of what is called charm in women, he calculated that whereas a man will buy a packet of ten cigarettes if he wants them, he is likely to buy a packet of twenty if it will bring any sign of pleasure into a pretty woman's face.

It argued a sound knowledge of life which his daughter was yet to possess with experience. And it worked. From behind the blinds of the billiard saloon opposite, he could generally see a young man seated on the cane-bottomed chair that had been purloined from the sitting-room at the back for the benefit of trade.

"If any of those young fellas don't behave as they ought to," he told her, "just you give 'em a clip across the face—or better still, send across to the saloon for me."

It is convincing proof of Jill's ignorance of life that she was emotionally convinced by this that her father had a deep regard for her welfare. She did not question the anomaly of his leaving her there alone to the mercy of these young men. She did not realise that while she was working, he was playing for a livelihood. She did not appreciate that when he lost at snooker it was the proceeds from the tobacco shop that met those losses; or that when he won he kept his winnings to himself.

When Mr. Mossop came home, tired of walking round a billiard table, and, sinking into an easy chair, inquired if the young men had treated her properly, she believed that she possessed a father who would protect her through all the vicissitudes of life. had been too young at the time to realise that her mother had died a disillusioned woman. But the deepest effect it had upon her was to make her regard all the young men with a certain protective suspicion. Her eagerness for life induced her to encourage those she liked up to a point. To equalise this, however, her suspicion made her quite capable, if the need arose, of looking after herself.

This type of young woman is turned out

by the thousand from the mould of parents who believe that what they bring into the world is theirs. Notwithstanding the fact that they have to leave it behind them—sometimes alone—when they are gone.

Jill Mossop had had many young men in love with her. She had gone with them to cinemas and permitted the holding of her hand. On occasions, she had been kissed, but only when the young man had been so amazed at his own temerity as to render the embrace quite innocuous. She knew by a common instinct when he was not more frightened than herself, and by a no less common instinct knew how to keep her more daring admirers at arm's length.

There is no need to descant upon that common instinct. All horses and most women have it. It warns them when to step carefully, when to take the bit between their teeth. They say the snaffle is cruel. I am not so sure. Any day a snaffle must be better than a pair of broken necks.

But this is not a treatise. It is a story. One morning Jill Mossop was sitting behind the counter in her father's tobacco shop in the High Street. Mr. Mossop himself was not yet risen from his bed. The day before, he had played snooker to exhaustion. He was eating his breakfast in bed and complaining, with a certain flavour of philosophy, of the weariness of life.

Jill was reading one of those papercovered novels which go to make the education of the modern young woman, when a young man, not more than twenty-three years of age, walked into the shop.

"Packet of Colorados," he said.
"Ten or twenty?" said she.

It sounds a simple thing to say, but said as Jill could say it, it frequently meant all the difference between a substantial lunch and a snack at the bar.

On this occasion, he being the first customer that morning and having the appearance which provides any woman to whom it appeals with that sensation of a quick tightening of her perceptions, she said it with more than usual charm. Her eyes glittered. There was a smile parting her lips that would never have parted them had she not had two rows of exceptionally pretty teeth.

"Ten or twenty?" she said, and had he asked for fifty in five separate packets, she would only have known what all women believe, that a man's folly is her opportunity.

To the no little surprise of Jill, the young man replied:

"Ten."

What was more, he said it not so much as if that were all he could afford, but as though, had she offered to give him twenty at the same price, he would not have accepted them. And then, as though to endorse that attitude of mind, he put down a pound note.

With that sense of rebuff which inevitably makes itself felt in a woman's mind in these encounters, she was almost prepared to tell him she had no change. But common sense is a saving characteristic. There is usually more than one tobacco shop in a crowded High Street.

She gave him his Colorados. She counted out his change. She kept the sight of her pretty teeth behind closed lips. They were not for anyone's enjoyment. And she turned to her novel as he went out of the

shop.

But the moment he had gone she looked up. She could not have said why. She was not conscious that her perceptions were still tightened. Rather she would have believed that she had no desire ever to see him again.

He was standing just outside the window. She could see him through the pyramidal dressings of cigarette packets, of pipes in their leather cases. He was counting his change.

Somehow that annoyed her. He had not even availed himself of that opportunity to remain in her company.

"Pooh!" she said, and looked back at her novel.

It is not quite possible to say what "Pooh" means. It is a cryptic word. Certain it is that no woman makes use of it unless she means it. But even if she could tell you what it meant, it is doubtful whether she would do so.

Jill said "Pooh" and looked back again at her book. A moment later she looked once more out of the window. He was crossing the street. She saw him go into the gentleman haberdasher's shop next to the billiard saloon.

If he dolled himself up with a new tie and a shirt to match, thought Jill—she wouldn't be seen going to a cinema with him. And she looked back for the third time at her novel. And then unaccountably, after a moment or two, she looked for the third time out of the window. He had made his purchase. He was just coming out. He walked a few steps away from the door and then he did what suddenly struck her as a remarkable and peculiar thing. He stood

still, raised his hand and began counting his change again.

What was he doing that for? He had just got a whole pound's worth of change from her. Nothing he could have bought in the haberdasher's shop could have cost the part of another pound. The sense of antagonism she had already felt was prone to and ready for suspicion. Before her mind had actually realised the full significance of what she was doing, she had taken his pound note out of the till. She examined it critically, then rustled it in her fingers.

Suspicion rose to conviction. There was something queer about it. It did not seem like the ordinary paper of a pound note. She left the shop and rushed upstairs.

"Look at that!" she said, and she thrust the piece of paper into her father's

hand. He held it up to the light.

"Who gave you that?" he asked. He was not sure enough about water-marks to know whether it were genuine or not, but this question was enough for her. She snatched it back out of his hands and ran downstairs.

Out in the street, she saw him looking into another shop window as though he were deciding what he would buy. She stood in a doorway and watched him. He went in. She waited. A few minutes later he came out and walked a little way down the street. Then again he stopped, raised his hand, opened it and counted his change.

There was a policeman on point duty across the road. She ran through the

traffic and caught his arm.

"That man!" she said. "Down there with the brown coat and the grey felt hat!

He's changing dud notes."

She followed along at a distance behind the policeman and saw him lay his hand on the man's shoulder. She saw the quivering start of the man's body, like a rabbit that hears the sound of a gun beyond the hedge. He turned round. She saw his face—not much of good looks about it then. It was as grey as the ashes of burnt paper.

#### II.

JILL Mossop found herself what in the neighbourhood of the High Street was called—famous. The arrest of Jack Bonner led to the arrest of Sandy Stewart, alias Thomas Hemming, who was described as one of the cleverest forgers the police had known for many years. Jill was complimented for her astuteness and prompt action by the magistrate when the two

vivid detail as though he had witnessed it

from beginning to end. When someone

asked why he had not gone out and told

the policeman himself, he thought of another

way, but found, with the chagrin of the

creative artist, that he was only a seven

days' wonder and a mere reflection at that.

prisoners pleaded guilty and were committed for trial. She was visited in the tobacco shop by a gentleman who had the honour and appearance of belonging to the Daily Press. Her photograph, provided by the photographer a little farther along the road, appeared in one of the daily papers.



Mr. Mossop said:

"I've brought my girl up right to look after herself. It ain't so very wonderful for a girl to have done when you bring her up right."

When he found that this sort of statement precluded further interest in the billiard saloon, he adopted other measures. He told the story of Jack Bonner's arrest with

copies of the newspaper in which her photograph had appeared. For a few days she had allowed it to remain pinned to the wall behind the counter, where her father had pinned it—for business purposes.

But one day, before her fame had quite flickered out, she had suddenly torn it down. Pleased as she was with her achievement and much as it had gratified with its epic

justice and its dramatisation of that cryptic exclamation. Pooh !—she had never quite been able to rid her mind of that sight of Jack Bonner's body with the quivering start that shook it as the policeman's hand had been laid on his shoulder. She could not quite forget the grey pallor of that face she had seen as he turned to the summons of his arrest.

"'Cos it's silly," she retorted. "If everybody had their pictures in the paper for running out and

smarted when she found that Jack Bonner never looked once in her direction from the dock.

His face no longer had that grey look of terror—but it was pale. She could see tragedy in it. She had never seen a man



fetching a policeman there'd be no room left for you to read about your football cup-ties."

At the trial, she was called upon to give evidence. She bought a new costume for it. Thirty-five and six—a coat and skirt in the Edgware Road. She was conscious that she looked her best. A consciousness that

from whose face the manhood had been taken. It was her first acquaintance with a court of law. Whatever he got, she told herself, he deserved, for changing dud notes. It was stealing. And yet as she looked at him standing there, so different in the broken attitude of his body from the callous companion at his side, she felt no longer the thrill of pride at having been the means of his arrest

After her evidence, the judge complimented her as well on the promptness of her behaviour.

"Anyone," he said, "who runs this class of man to earth, is doing a service to the

community."

She had run him to earth. She looked across at the dock and saw his face thrust into the mud. It was as though she were kneeling on his back and holding his head down in the filth of the roadway. He would never be clean again. This was life. The good and the bad. It was not difficult to distinguish. And yet, when first he came into the tobacco shop, who would ever have thought he was like that?

The case did not take long. Both prisoners pleaded guilty, but for Jack Bonner, the gentleman with the white wig and the papers urged extenuating circum-

stances.

"This is his first offence," he said. made the acquaintance of the older prisoner at a football match. It was plainly a case of a man being drawn into evil. Bonner was engaged to be married. Apparently he loved the girl he was going to make his wife with that kind of inordinate affection the very strength of which was its weakness. She liked finery and pretty dresses. His love for her induced him to try and give her everything she wanted. But he was only earning two pounds ten a week. She wouldn't marry him on those earnings. He tried to keep her interest in him as well as he could. He met the prisoner Stewart. The rest is plain. He has refused to make any statement about this in court. All he will tell your lordship is that the day on which he was arrested was the last day that he had consented to work in company with the older prisoner. He was going straight from that onwards. I have every reason to suppose that the girl had found out what he was doing and had jilted him. He has not told me this himself, but I have made

"Is this the case?" inquired the judge.

"I didn't ask him to say nothing," said

Bonner.

"Is this the case?" repeated the judge.

Bonner refused to reply.

"I shall sentence the prisoner Stewart to five years' penal servitude," said the judge. "The prisoner Bonner must go to prison for two years."

Jill Mossop returned home. She went

straight up to her room and took off ner new coat and skirt.

#### III.

Two years is an entirely comparative length of time. In Mr. Mossop's tobacco shop in the High Street it passed quickly or moderately for Jill according to the number of engagements for dances and cinemas to which she could look forward from one week to another. A few more young men kissed her when the lights had gone down on the big picture. But whereas before their timidity had her approval, she found now it only increased her contempt for them.

"Don't be a silly ass," she would say—

"messing about like that."

Whereupon, instead of sidling up to her and stealing an arm surreptitiously round her neck, she would find they became huffed and sulky, and the next evening when she went to the cinema she would see them with someone else.

She nevertheless still retained her suspicions for the more daring of her admirers. She kept them at arm's length with sudden stiffnesses of her body and her lips. Still instinctively she knew when there was safety in showing her teeth and when there was not. And all this time the tobacco shop in the High Street paid its way while Mr. Mossop acquired with increasing precision the art of playing snooker.

It was a little more than two years later, and one afternoon when Jill was sitting in the shop, reading, as was still her entertainment behind the counter, the door opened and Jack Bonner entered. He closed the door behind him and crossed to the counter, standing in front of her and saying nothing.

She put her book down and stood up. For a moment she waited in silence, then she

said:

"What do you want?"

"Want to tell you something," he said. She was not exactly conscious of being afraid of him so much as she felt afraid of life. Imprisonment had not aged him. It had destroyed him. He was no longer the young man who had come with assurance into the shop that morning and asked for a packet of Colorados. Now it was not her perceptions that were tightened. It was something which, romantically, she would have called her heart that was wrung.

"What do you want to tell me?" she

asked.

"Nothing I'm going to say here."

"Where then?"

he simply said:

"Let's sit."

They sat down.

Bonner was there before her, waiting. She

was expecting him to offer his hand and was

pleasurably looking forward to taking it, but

For a few moments it appeared as though

he had nothing to say. He sat with his

"In the Park."

Apparently he had it all planned out. When, hesitatingly, she made further inquiries, he could tell her the exact spota seat under a big elm tree—there they could meet. The time was agreed upon. She said she would be there.

As he was turning to go, she obeyed an

unpremeditated impulse to take a box of cigarettes off a shelf. They were sold by weight, loose in the box. It was half full. She handed it to him across the counter. "Like a cigarette?" she said.

He turned his eyes on her for one moment. Then refusing her offer but without words, he swung on his heel and walked out of the shop.

For the greater part of the next twenty-



four hours before the time arranged for their appointment, she told herself she would not go. Her offer of that cigarette had been friendly. Not only his refusal of it but his whole manner to her had been contemptuous. Yet half an hour before the time of their meeting, she called her father from the billiard saloon. She went upstairs and put on her best frock and she went out.

elbows on his knees, his face in his hands and

"What did you want me to come here for?" she asked. She wanted to add—"if you've got nothing to say." But she was afraid to. Not afraid of him, but still afraid of life. Indeed he seemed to have lost his personality and become a symbol.

"What did you want me to come here for?" was all she said, and he replied:

"Because this was the spot where my girl told me she'd finished with me."

"What's that to do with me?" she asked. He looked up into her face and she knew that two years can be a hundred years, that life has nothing to do with time.

"It has this much to do with you," he said—"that it was you got me pinched."

"I didn't know nothing about that girl then," she returned.

"No—all you knew was that when I came into that shop I didn't take no notice of you. When you smiled at me I didn't smile back, and that riled you. All that that magistrate said about your having public spirit and the papers what they printed, that was all muck. You didn't have no public spirit. You got me pinched because I hadn't flattered you. I saw that in your face when you came up after that bobby had got me. Didn't realise it then. Had time to realise a lot of things since then."

It was so simply and yet so penetratingly true; it was so astonishing to realise it herself that she could say nothing in denial. With a certain bewilderment she could only ask him if that was what he had brought her there for, just to say that to her.

"To say that," he said—" and one or two other things. I don't know where that other girl's gone or I'd say them to her. I'd say them to her and then I'd take her neck in my fingers and I'd wring the breath out of it. Seeing there's only you, I'm going to say them here. You needn't be frightened."

"I'm not," she said.

Unaccountably that was true. She was not frightened. Not of him.

"Well-you needn't be," he went on. "I'm not going to wring your neck. Someone would have nabbed me. I was meant to be nabbed. But I'm just going to tell you what I've thought about women these two years I've been away-what I've thought about her and what I've thought about you, though you never did me any harm. like she did. But I've thought it and I'm going to say it. I've thought it so long that I had to say it to someone. I came out vesterday. Full sentence. No ticket of leave for me. I wanted to start with a clear road. No reporting every month at the police station and having them talk about you till the neighbourhood knew all about it. A clear road. No one can say I've been in quod. They won't know. I've paid my bit and it's done with. But the first thing I thought when I came out was to tell some woman what I thought of her and her kind.

She's gone, so I just went to the tobacco shop in the High Street where there was a lady I knew who'd understand what I was talking about. That's you. And now I'll tell you what I think of women."

Jill looked at him—fascinated—silent.

"Women don't know anything about life," he said presently. "No more than a child knows about a toy. It plays with it. That's all. And when it won't go any longer the way it wants it to, it kicks it into the corner and won't have nothing more to do with it. That's women. All they know about a man is how they can play with him. If they get tired of him, they'll find another. If I don't go my way without a woman from this on—God help me. I shall deserve all I get."

"Anything more you've got to say?" she

asked, breathing quickly.

He buried his face in his hands again and stared at the grass. When he looked up she had gone.

### IV.

ABOUT three weeks later, a morning when Mr. Mossop was having his breakfast in bed, the door of the tobacco shop in the High Street opened and Bonner entered. Jill stood behind the counter and stared at him. He was another man. The Jack Bonner that had been destroyed by circumstance had returned to life again. He was the same young man who two years ago had tightened her perceptions.

Standing behind the counter, she stared at him as though he were a new customer she had never seen before.

"What can I do for you?" she asked.
"Listen," he said—"that's all I want
you to do—listen. I've got a job—three
quid a week."

Keeping to her resolve never to speak to a man again, she inquired frigidly what that had got to do with her.

"Thought you'd like to hear."

" Why ? "

"Well—I'd got to tell someone. I couldn't keep it to myself."

"But why tell it to a woman?" she said.
"'Cos you were the only one I knew who'd know what it meant."

"Thank you," said Jill. "Anything else?". He paused a minute and then he felt in his pocket.

"Packet of Colorados," he said.

"Ten or twenty?"

She couldn't help it then. She smiled. She showed her teeth.

## WATERS OF BABYLON:

## By ALEC WAUGH

■ ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

AN I get nothing for the master: a little soup?"

Wearily James Arbutt shook his head. There was nothing to be done; when malaria had its hold on you there never was anything to be done but dose yourself with quinine, lie out on a long chair wrapped round with blankets and wait for the long healing flood of sweat into which ultimately this shivering ague would dissolve. There was nothing to be done. But the brown servant remained motionless beside him, an expression of pained perplexity in his soft brown eyes.

"The master is very sick," he said. "Should not the master be moved back to station?"

Again James Arbutt shook his head. To go sick; to be taken back to Pangrai as Faversham had been, on a stretcher; to be sent home on leave, and while back there to be told that the directors much regretted that they did not consider he had the constitution to withstand so testing, so difficult a climate. No, no . . . too many of the white men who had come to the jungle country had flung in their hands. How many lasted the full course? One in ten perhaps. Of the dozen or so fellows who had come to the teak forests in the first year after the war, there was besides himself only Merivale still working in North Siam. The others, Faversham and Giles and Evans, one by one they had gone back. One by one the jungle had beaten them.

The survival of the fittest. That was what they had told him when he signed on in London. And he had pictured as the long black and buff-coloured liner ploughed its way eastwards through the cooled and tossing waters of the monsoon, such a life of romantic danger as the word "jungle" wakes in the half-envious, half-reluctant imaginings of Western peoples; a life of

wild animals and savage natives, of plundering and poison and raids by night. That is what he had taken them to mean when they had spoken in the Kingsway Offices of the Madras-Moulmain Timber Company of the survival of the fittest.

But it had not been like that.

It was not against tangible enemies that you fought. There were cobra of course in plenty, and the tracks round your tent of bear and panther. And now and again a coolie would run amok, scattering terror through a diminished district. But those were not the enemies you fought. It was not cobra nor panther nor wild-eyed native that had sent Giles and Faversham and the others shivering home. It had been the loneliness; the sequence of sun-drenched weeks with never a white man to speak to; it had been the discomfort; the itch of prickly heat, the leeches, the mosquitoes, and the mud sores; the sandflies that no netting could keep out; the red ants that night after night made sleep impossible; it had been the long depression of the September rains when bedding and kit were soaked, and for days on end it would be impossible to wear dry clothing; it had been the fever which took its toll, slowly spasm by spasm, of your vitality and courage. Those were the enemies you fought.

Through strained and streaming eyes he could see from the verandah of his bungalow, across the brown waters of the Reping down which the logs were drifting on their slow five years' journey towards Bangkok, the towering splendour of the jungle. There it stood, lovely and cool and green in the mild October sunlight. And lying there he recalled the gasp of wonder with which he had for the first time seen it. It was so beautiful. You could not believe that anything so beautiful could be so full of poison,

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that those green recesses concealed not peace and quiet but disease and misery and decay; that the very depths of that luxuriant greenery betrayed the malice of its heart, that the measure of its beauty was the measure of its hate, that the very creepers that festooned the trees, heightening their grandeur, making them lovelier than any trees of the West could be, were in fact slowly crushing them to death, eating away their strength, replenished with it, as the fever that fed upon his youth.

"Is there," the boy repeated, "nothing

that I can get the master?"

No, no, there was nothing to be got, nothing to be done. He must just hang on as he had done before, hang on and wait for the healing release of sweat. It might be that he was really ill; it might be that his staying here was a risk. But the risk of going back to Pangrai was even There was always the chance that they might class him as "unfit." was not as though it were for himself alone that he was fighting. If it were, he might have run like Faversham the risk of being carried back to station on a stretcher. But there was another to be considered. And as at those other moments when he had felt his resolution weakening, he clung as priests will to the emblems of their faith, to the memory of the small pleading face that had been lifted piteously with lips that trembled as his train four years ago had drawn slowly from the station. "Darling," she had whispered, "it'll be all right. know it will.'

He had met her during a leave in the summer of 1918, and in its circumstance and setting it had been a conventional enough courtship. A country house, the swooning sweetness of an English spring, a girl who seemed the embodiment of spring; their combined appeal was irresistible to one who had known for months on end the monotony and dreary horror of modern war. While she, who had only six weeks earlier put up her hair, was meeting a man on an equality almost for the first time, was seeing for the first time in a man's eyes the light of Within five days of meeting, they fervour. had become engaged. Golden, halcyon, unfretted days. But though at this time there had been raised little enough opposition to their engagement, they were to find the moment the war was over conditions drastically reversed. James Arbutt, instead of being a Captain in the Loamshires, with a position of importance, and pay in plenty

to be spent on leave, was now one of many thousand young men in the middle twenties, without a job, and without any training for a job, in a world that was speedily forgetting its promises now that the need for displaying gratitude had passed. For six weeks casually, then for two months feverishly, he ransacked London for any job that would both support him and hold out the prospect of advancement. By the end of those fourteen weeks his gratuity was practically consumed.

"And have you any immediate plans?"
Dorothy's father had begun to ask him.

Dismally he shook his head. No, he had no plans; he would accept any reasonable job that he was offered. But he did not after four years' fighting propose to commit himself for life to an occupation that promised nothing but a prolonged battle against penury.

Mr. Graham pursed his lips. "Quite, quite," he said. "I sympathise with you entirely. But at the same time, while your future is so uncertain, I cannot help feeling that the position is a little unfair on

Dorothy."

Arbutt received the blow unflinchingly. It was only what he had been expecting for some while past. One thing alone in that request concerned him.

"Has Dorothy asked you to say this?"

he said.

And the assurance that such an idea had never occurred to her was the one incident in those three months that had not been a blow to his self-confidence.

"Very well," he said, "if I can't get any-

thing within ten days, I'll clear."

Desperately he began his search. But though he was desperate he kept his head. On one point he was decided. It was no good looking for a job in England. His country, now that the war was over, had no use for him. He had thought when the last shot was fired over the Flanders fields that he was coming home for good. But apparently that last shot was only to be the signal for another wandering. Within a week he had signed his contract with the Madras-Moulmain Timber Company.

Dorothy was breathlessly excited when he

old her.

"D-darling, it'll be like a pienic. Siam, and the jungle, and camping out. I'll love it. Do come back quickly to take me out there. And while you're away I'll write to you every week, oh, such terribly long letters."

She had kept her word. Those treasured letters that had been brought to him across rivers and through mud had never degenerated into brief and impersonal bulletins of They had been coloured and vivid like herself, an eager description and commentary of the life she led, the care-free happy life of the London that had abandoned itself to pleasure. She was dining here and dancing there, she had been to this play and to that, met this and the other person. But all the time, in spite of the ceaseless variety and movement of that world, her need of him had never lessened. "If you were here it would be perfect; but as it is, there's always the chief thing missing.'

And now in a few weeks he would be returning to her. He had reached a position on which it would be amply possible to marry. There remained nothing beyond the obtaining of his manager's permission. But that he knew would not be easy. For the assistants in the Madras-Moulmain were allowed to marry only with the approval of authority. And Carrington, his manager, had never given such leave readily. He preferred his assistants to be undistracted. In the days when he had himself come out, twenty-five years back, when there was no railway line and the journey by boat from Bangkok took upwards of seven weeks, there had been scarcely a white woman in Pangrai; and Carrington, who had married a Siamese, a girl of good family, the daughter of an official, was unsympathetic to the new conditions that not only had simplified but encouraged a European marriage. Carrington was one of the finest men that the teak country had ever known. There would be no one, brown or white, who would not regret his retirement when it came. But he was as hard as he was just. And although between Arbutt and himself there existed, despite the disparity of age, a relationship of mutual and very genuine respect, the younger man was by no means looking forward to the interview which would be taking place a week or so later during one of Carrington's periodic visits to the workings.

Whatever happens, thought Arbutt, I must be fit when he comes up. He mustn't think me a weakling whom he could do just as well without.

So he hung on, shivering between the weight of blankets, on the long canvas chair. Lay there, hanging on, gazing with tired eyes over the little compound, so calm and placid in the amber sunlight, listening with

tired ears to the soft tinkle of the cowbells, and the murmur of hidden life that quivered about the jungle's edge.

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A little weak, a little shaken, but with eyes that shone resolutely behind their dark-rimmed lids, James Arbutt followed a few days later at Carrington's side the inspection of some recent fellings.

"You're not looking well," said Carring-

ton. "Anything the matter?"

Arbutt shrugged the inquiry aside. "Nothing much, a touch of fever. It was over in an hour or so."

Doubtfully Carrington shook his head. "You must be careful, you know, careful." He was a tall, sunburnt, bearded man, rough of voice and rough of manner.

"Must be careful," he repeated. "Won't do to have you crocking yourself up. Can't afford to lose the only man we've had out here since the war worth anything. And with my post falling vacant soon, don't know what we shall do if you're not here to take it up."

He spoke gruffly, in the offhand way that was his manner, but his words sent the blood pounding triumphantly through Arbutt's veins.

"What, me manager?" he cried.

"Who else should be?"

" Merivale?"

"Merivale's not coming back."

" What ? "

To Arbutt the news came as a complete surprise. Merivale, who was the only one of the immediately post-war crowd to stand the strain of the first Chukker, was three months his senior. And Arbutt had often ruefully reflected that those three months would stand permanently in the way of his own promotion. Carrington's next remark flung, however, a cloud over his excitement.

"He wrote last week," Carrington explained, "to ask if he could bring a wife with him. And I told him that Bangkok, not Pangrai is the place for timber men with wives. It's no use," he added, "I've seen too much. You can't take a white woman up into the jungle, and a married man's worrying the whole time to get back to station. It wouldn't do."

To Arbutt the words were like the passing of a sentence on himself. So that in spite of his own interests he felt himself forced to plead Merivale's case for him.

"You can't blame him," he said. "It'

a lonely life."

"Blame him? Good heavens, no. Loneliness. I understand that all right."

Who indeed understood it better? What else had it been but loneliness that had driven him twenty years back on the return from his first leave to propose marriage to the little Siamese lady at whose father's house he had been invited frequently to dine? Loneliness, it had been no more than that; the need for a close comradeship, for the feeling that one belonged to someone, for a home real and ready for him when he came out to the jungle. Loneliness; he knew the geography of that road all right.

"Pretty rough luck on him," urged

Arbutt.

But Carrington had lived a hard life too

long for sentiment.

"Can't have a thing both ways. Man's got to choose. No need, though, for you to grumble." 47

It was with a wry smile that Arbutt

answered him.

"There wouldn't have been if I hadn't been thinking of asking you pretty well the same thing myself."

"What, wanting to get married?"

- "On my leave."
  "'Um!" and Carrington pursed his lips, scratching slowly at his shaggy beard. "I'm sorry," he said, "very, very sorry." And though the expression of his eyes was kindlier than Arbutt had ever seen it, he again felt that sentence was being passed on him.
  - "Nice of you," he murmured wretchedly.

"What is ?"

"Being sorry at losing me." Carrington laughed at that.

"Losing you?" he cried. "Who's talk-

ing about losing you?"

'What else, then, did you mean?"

Throwing back his head, Carrington

laughed noisily.

"Anything but that," he cried. "Lose you? You're much too valuable. I'm only sorry because it's such a tremendous risk."

But Arbutt was in no mood at that moment to consider risks. This only he could grasp: that miraculously the permission to marry had been granted him, and that it would be to the life of a manager's, not an assistant's, wife that he would be bringing Dorothy.

"Then I may?"

"If I'm not stopping you, who is?" "In Merivale's case, though . . ."

"Merivale was different. Unmarried he was just good enougn. Married he'd have been under standard. But you . . . well, you can come to us on your own terms. No, no, don't start thanking me. You're a good man, and we want good men. We've no use for anything else. And the supply's running a bit thin just now.

"All the same," he added after a pause, "it is a risk, a colossal risk. One's lonely, and life needs sweetening, but it's not a place for more than one white woman in a

thousand."

Arbutt was scarcely listening. In six weeks he would be going home. In six months he would be married. His eyes were dazzled so that the rice fields were hazy below him, and the hills beyond the golden crested teak were lost in the dark background of the jungle's foliage. Risks, what were risks, when one was under thirty? Besides, Dorothy was that one woman in a thousand.

"D-darling, oh darling, darling!"

The instant they were alone together in the taxi she had turned to him, her arms flung recklessly about his neck, her face lifted to a long and breathless kiss that consoled and concealed the hardships and the loneliness of two hundred weeks.

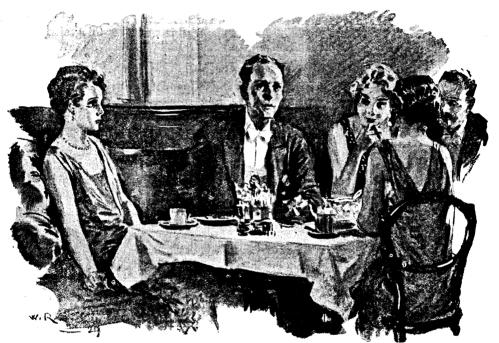
"It's too marvellous," she was whispering; "it's just as though you had never been away at all." Which was indeed what he had felt himself when he had seen her waiting at the platform barrier, unaltered for all that four years of changing fashion that had intervened between him and the girl who had murmured on that distant morning through piteously trembling lips, "Darling, it'll be all right. I know it will." She was the same brown-haired, brown-eyed Dorothy, with the laughing eyes and quick stammer in her voice. And she was in his arms and her cheek was against his, and because the moment was too tense for both of them, she was filling the hallowed interval with such trivial chatter as one might gabble over a telephone to the friend whom one had seen yesterday and was dining with to-night.

"We've arranged such a h-heavenly party," she was saying. "It would have been jollier to have been alone, of course, but if you will only give your friends five minutes' notice . . . I've had this date fixed for weeks. So I rang up Janet, she's a perfect dear, you'll love her, and I said, 'G-gentleman friend, come back on leave, and she said, 'Bring gentleman friend, and find another girl to make the party square.' It's at the Splendide at half-past eight, and afterwards we'll be going to the Clarion or perhaps the Carnival. I d-dare say the Carnival would be more amusing, the Clarion's getting dull. All these places do after they've been running a couple of months. And I do want it to be a jolly evening. Oh, Jimmie d-dear, life's going to be such tremendous fun having you back an' all!"

She was what she had always been, the same breathless, light-hearted, buoyant Dorothy. There had been moments, dark moments over there, when he had wondered, in spite of his faith in her, whether it might not be to a changed Dorothy that he would

away. Minor changes there were, of course: the shingled instead of the bobbed hair, the wide billioning pannier skirts—a half step, who knew? to the crinoline. And men were wearing their trousers looser, and the wide-ended ties were new, and the double-breasted waistcoats of the same piqué as the shirts. But in its essence it was the old life unaltered—the glow, the glitter, the animation.

There were ten of them at the large round table in the room's far corner, and the talk was flung backwards and forwards from mouth to mouth with the old care-free



"He felt unhappy, too, on account of the strange puzzled look in the soft brown eyes that were looking up at him,"

be returning. Letters told one so little, after all. And four years was a long time. She had been scarcely eighteen when he had said good-bye to her. Eighteen to twenty-two. Those irresponsible, those heady years when a girl was coming out, finding her feet, the object from hour to hour of fresh influences and fresh impressions. Who could tell whither these tides and currents might not be taking her? But she was as unchanged as the London that she had cast mantlewise about her.

And as he stood beside her that evening in the Splendide lounge he had intoxicatingly that sensation which comes to most wanderers at times of never having been gaiety. The old talk too: of Lord's and Ranelagh and dances. There were new names, of course: new names drifting across their life like the long grey logs down the brown waters of the Reping. The same talk, though, the same river.

"It's like a miracle," he murmured, as the lights round the room were lowered, and with Dorothy pressed close against him he swung into the long rhythm of a valse. "I feel as though everything that happened between now and my going was a blank; as though it were only yesterday I went."

In his arms and warm and nestling Dorothy was laughing happily.

"And you're d-dancing, darling," she

said, "just as one did then, with your knees bent horribly."

But there was no criticism, only happy comment in her reproof.

"You'll have to give me lessons."

"Lots and lots."

"We get awfully out of date," he explained, "with things out there."

"Still dancing 'the bells are ringing'?"

"When we dance at all."

"How do you mean?"

"There are not a great many partners to choose among in the jungle."

"There's Bangkok."

He laughed. "I didn't set foot in Bangkok between the day I arrived and the day I sailed."

Her eyebrows were raised incredulously.

"Then where do you d-dance?"

"Oh, just now and again in the station."
But it was not the hour to discuss Siam

But it was not the hour to discuss Siam. After an interval of four years they were dancing again together: and it did not matter that his knees were bent in the manner of a dated summer. They were together. His hands were upon her shoulder, her hair close against his cheek. Through their warmed veins was beating the valse's rhythm: like a mist her powdered fragrance rose about them.

"And where are we going now?" she cried, as they joined the others at the table. "Oh no," she protested, as someone suggested that they might just as well stop on a little longer. "We've been three hours here already. And three hours in one place in one evening . . . really, Janet, I ask you! So which is it to be, the Carnival or the Clarion?"

"What about the Green Grotto?"

"There's a goodish cabaret at the Blue Bohemians."

"Personally I'm for the Spanish Oven." Eagerly but amicably for a few moments the rival claimants were contrasted. There was a good band at the Green Grotto, but the floor was ridiculously minute, and though the Clarion was fearfully jolly, of course, with its ebony black floor and purple and gold hangings, and fountain playing dreamily in the lounge, one had been really so often there. "We shall only be meeting," said Dorothy, "the same lot." And the Spanish Oven was too like an oven, while the Carnival . . .

In the end they decided on the Blue Bohemians. "For a while, at any rate," was Dorothy's emendation, and there was the chartering of a fleet of taxis, and at the end of a dark alley on the third floor of a suspicious structure they exchanged a stack of Treasury notes for the privilege of ordering watered Chablis at five-and-six a glass, and dancing shoulder to shoulder on a strip of walnut measuring fifteen feet by ten. It was hot and crowded and uninspiring. The band was lifeless. The room was empty of celebrities.

"This is awful," murmured Janet, at the end of thirty minutes. "Whoever was it that suggested this mausoleum?"

"Three months ago," murmured apologetically the young guardsman who was responsible.

"Three months ago," it was retorted.
"No place is worth anything after its first seven weeks."

"Can't bear any place," said Dorothy,

"much more than once myself."

"Well, anyhow, let's go somewhere else." So once again there was a scramble for cloaks and hats, and once again there was a discussion with taximen on the brinks of payements.

"We want to go somewhere," said Dorothy, "that we've never been to before."

"What about the Green Grotto?"

"Been there."

"Or the Spanish Oven."

"Know every inch of it."

"Or the Clarionette."

But they knew the Clarionette and the Carnival and the Forty-nine.

"Well, Miss," he said at last, "there's still the Acme."

The Acme. There was a pause, while each in turn sifted the memory of protracted nights. The Acme? No, no one could remember it.

"Heavenly!" cried Dorothy. "I adore going to new places. New places and new people. They're the only things that make life worth living."

But as she spoke, she leant lightly on her lover's arm, whispering in that silent pressure of those other things that were of such great matter. And in the taxi as they sat side by side she slipped her hand softly into his.

"Happy, dearest?"

His fingers returned her pressure, but in truth he was feeling, as the evening lengthened, more than a little breathless in this taut atmosphere of bustle. It was all rather too electric for one who had not seen altogether more than two score Europeans during his four years' exile, and who was in the habit of travelling not in rattling taxicabs

but in the wake of lumbering elephants. He was more than a little relieved when Dorothy cried in the doorway of a silk-hung, high-galleried basement hall, "Oh, but this is h-heavenly, Jimmie, heavenly," and still more relieved when the cabaret was at an end, when the blare of the saxophone had softened, when the room began to empty, and for those that remained the hour had come for kippers and fried eggs and quiet talk. Happy and tired and drowsily content they lolled back against a low right-angled many-cushioned sofa, while the waiter cleared the table of champagne and laid out the cloth for breakfast.

"And how," asked one of the men, "does this sort of thing compare with your Siamese

variety?"

Arbutt laughed. "It does not compare at all. There's nothing to compare it with."

"No night clubs?"

"There are only thirty white people in the place."

"Thirty!" echoed Janet.

"Apart from the mission folk."

"Thirty," Janet repeated. "Then what

on earth do you find to do?"

"Oh, well," and he paused, wondering what indeed they did find to do, or rather how he was to explain to these sophisticated townsfolk the essence of a world which had in truth, when you had come to know it, an attraction for which you might search in vain through Europe.

"Come now," said the guardsman cheerfully. "Let's have a sketch of the jungle

wallah's day."

"It would sound awfully dull. It would bore you horribly."

"Oh no, it wouldn't."

"Of course it wouldn't."

"We'll stop you if it does."

And one by one they began to fire questions at him; questions that built up answer by answer the rough picture of that exile's world

"And the women," asked Janet, "what do they do?"

"What women?"

"The men's wives, of course."

"They're not many of them married."

"But those that are."

"Oh, well, for the most part they stay in the station," he explained. "Some of them go up to the jungle during the dry season, but it isn't fearfully comfortable. It isn't like India and Burma. There's less sleeping in bungalows than in tents." "And the ones that stay in the station, what do they do?"

"Hang about the house. It's too hot to do much else. In the evening they go down to the Club."

"The Club?"

"It's a Sports Club, really. There's a polo ground and golf and tennis, and when it gets dark, we sit in front of the Club House and have drinks."

And as he spoke there rose clearly before him a picture of the Pangrai Club: the long polo ground, the wide-spreading trees, the great clumps of bamboo with their towering plumes; and the little table with the bottles spread out on it, round which they would sit talking when the light had failed, ten to a dozen of them attached to one another by those ties of mutual interdependence and reliance for which there was no counterpart in the self-contained, self-sufficient nature of city life. Very clearly he could see it all, but he could find no words with which to convey the hallowing content of those tranquil evenings. You had to go there to understand. Otherwise it would be like looking from the outside at a stained-glass window: and he felt unhappy on account of his inability to explain the reality of that content; unhappy, too, on account of the strange puzzled look in the soft brown eyes that were looking up at him. She had sat there silently, taking no part in the conversation, but it seemed to him that in spite of his innumerable letters she was visualising now for the first time the life he was expecting her to share.

And is that," she said slowly, "what

happens every night?"

He nodded.

"Every night," she continued, "the same

people?

"More or less. Now and then people come up from Bangkok. And the jungle men are coming in every few months or so for a rest."

"And that's all," she said, "that's what life's like there all the year? There's no

variety?"

He shook his head, wretchedly conscious of his incapacity to show by what impalpable influences a life that simplicity had sweetened was constantly renewed. He could not, he knew he could not. To Dorothy it could seem nothing but a living prison.

"There's the Christmas meet," he said, "when all the fellows come in from the forests, and we have dancing and polo, and the Gymkhana championship. We have ling," and jumping to her feet she pretty good fun then." At any



And he smiled, remembering the terrific fortnights when the jungle wallahs made amends in a few days for the tedium of many months: long, hard days of golf and squash and polo, followed by long nights of revelry.

But they're the same people," Dorothy persisted, "the same people you've been seeing all the year?"

"Oh yes, the usual jungle crowd."
Dorothy shuddered. "The same people,

and the same place. Oh, my poor dar-

rate," she cried, "we can d-dance now." But that earlier thrill was irrecapturable. Their feet were moving no longer intoxicatingly to the same rhythm, it was mechanical and uninspired. A gloom had fallen over them.

"It's getting late," the guardsman was muttering. "And I've an earlyish parade to-morrow. Don't let me break the party up."

Everyone was, however, glad, it seemed, of an excuse to break the party up.

"It really is, Janet darling, getting a little late."

"And I've seen the day break twice this week."

"And there's the Houstons' show tomorrow."

"It's been such a h-heavenly evening."
It was without gaiety and with no long pavement conversations that they dispersed.

And it was in silence though hand in hand that Arbutt and Dorothy drove back together. They were oppressed, both of them, by the menacing shadow of a fear.

Suddenly with a little sob Dorothy turned and flung herself into her lover's arms.

"Darling, oh darling, darling," she cried, "I love you so. Whatever I do. Whatever may happen, do believe that, do remember



As they leant against the verandah rail, watching the elephants file one by one into the compound, they were acutely conscious of the similarity of their positions."

that. I'll never love anyone as I'm loving you now."

With eyes that tears were blinding James Arbutt sat gazing at the letter whose contents he knew practically by heart.

"It's no good, darling dear" (it ran), "it would be simply misery for both of us. In ten years when I've worked through all this I might be able to, or if I had gone out at the very beginning before all this had started.

... But I've taken root here now. And I'd just wither if I were transplanted. It's not only myself I'm thinking of. If it were I believe I'd risk it. But it wouldn't be myself only that I'd hurt. I'd smash your life up and your career. And a man's what his job makes him. I'd only be a drag on you. It's no good, Jimmy darling, and you know it, and I'm broken-hearted."

He had read and re-read how many times now those dozen or so lines of straggling minute handwriting? But in his imagination how many times oftener had he not re-read them, the lines of the letter that from the very beginning he had realised sooner or later he must read? From the very start he had realised that, from that first evening when they had rushed hectically across London in search of new people and new places. They loved each other; of that there could be no doubting, they loved each other; but love was not everything. Love, like all else, depended on its setting. And if he were to move Dorothy from her setting into his . . . no, no, it wouldn't do. She was quite right. It wouldn't do.

From its corner beside the mantelpiece the bell of the telephone began to tinkle.

"It's m-me, Dorothy," breathlessly and eagerly a voice was saying. "I've thought of something. Such an idea. I was talking last night to Uncle Harold. He said if you'd chuck your teak job, he'd give you a chance in his office, and it would be quite a decent opening. C-couldn't you, Jimmy, couldn't you?"

For a moment, while she was actually speaking, with the sound of those loved accents in his ear, the temptation to accept was overpowering. And had she been standing before him as she made the offer, had it been a presence and not a voice that pleaded, he would have been little able to resist the glowing of those soft eyes, the trembling of that so loved mouth. She would have stretched out her arms to him,

and like a blinded man he would have staggered to their sanctuary, to the warmth, the bliss, the security that they promised.

But she was not beside him, and the voice was still, and across his indecision spoke imperiously the recognition of that long chain of loyalties by which he was attached to that far station, that small community of men and women who had trusted and befriended him, who had made him one of them, who had taught him his job, who had relied on his return.

"Couldn't you, Jimmy, couldn't you?"
For one clear-sighted instant he saw in all its swooning sweetness what marriage to Dorothy would mean: that rapture which he would find in no other arms, against no other lips. But though his heart was a shredded agony, he could not utter the syllables of surrender. A man and his job. What was it she had said about them? A man being what his job made him. And if he were to fling up that . . . no, no, he would be abandoning things that were not his to lose. They relied on him, those people; they had need of him. One must plough one's furrow to the end.

"I can't," he cried, "I can't! It's too late now, it's gone too deep. Those other fellows they've been good, they've trusted me. It's too late. I can't go back upon them now!"

"Here they come at last!"

It had been a long day's march. Twelve miles or so through flooded rice fields and the rockiest of mountain paths, and Arbutt and Carrington, who had been afraid of rain, had pushed on in front, arriving at the bungalow a good two hours ahead of the elephants and coolies. They had had their tiffin, and were sitting drowsily content on the verandah steps. It was a September day: warm and golden, and across the swollen waters of the Reping the jungle towered green and fragrant after a night of rain.

"Another ten minutes," said Arbutt, "and we'll have our beds up."

At his side Carrington made no reply. His eyes were rested fondly on the familiar landscape: the hurrying river, the forest's luxuriant foliage, the little group of bamboo huts within the compound. Nature, on this lazy afternoon, in this interval of the autumn rains had rarely seemed more in harmony with man. An air of tranquil graciousness overhung the place. In the soft mud beside the water a couple of buffaloes were wading

leisurely with small naked infants straddled across their backs. In the shrubberies beyond cowbells were tinkling musically. In front of one of the bungalows a pot was boiling, and a group of Lao women in brightly coloured sarongs were seated round it, chewing betel nut. Tranquil, beyond speech, tranquil.

With a little sigh Carrington rose to his

feet.

"My last jungle trip," he said. "Well, I'll be sorry to say good-bye to it. You spend twenty years counting the weeks to your last Chukker, and then when it comes you find that the place has got a hold on you, and you'd be ready enough to begin the whole thing again."

"But you're not going back to England,

are you?"

Carrington shook his head. "No, no," he answered. "I've been here too long. Burma, perhaps, or Indo China, or I may go and have a look at Java. Not England, though; it's a foreign country to me now."

But that was not the reason. And Arbutt knew it. England was no place for a man with a Siamese wife and Eurasian children. That was why Carrington was staying East; to keep his children in their setting, where they could face their future on equal terms.

"Seen England for the last time," he said. And as they leant against the verandah rail, watching the elephants file one by one into the compound, they were acutely conscious of the similarity of their positions. They were English, both of them, with England in their bones and blood, yet here they were working on alien soil because a woman had promised things, because a

woman had laid hold on things. No reference had been ever made to Arbutt's unaccompanied return, three months back. It had been accepted as things are accepted in the far places where a man is allowed the privilege of his own secrets. But between Carrington and Arbutt the bond of intimacy had been drawn tighter by that uncommunicated sorrow.

Lazily Arbutt stretched his arms above his head. The last elephant had wound its way into the compound. The noisy business of unloading had begun. In five minutes their beds would be set up. They would "lie off" for an hour or so. Then after tea, after they had shaved and tubbed, they would stroll down to the river and watch the bathing of the elephants. They would linger for a little exchanging gossip with the villagers, till the sun had set and the time had come for the first stengah. They would not talk a great deal as they sat there sipping at their glasses, but they would be glad and grateful for each other's company. Their limbs would be lax and weary after the long day's march. Their eyes would be soothed after the long day's glare. In their ears the chorus of cicadas would murmur wooingly. They would just sit there savouring the relish of accomplished labour, their senses tranquillised, at peace under the tropic night.

With a long slow sigh that was half gratitude and half regret James Arbutt drew the heavy sun-soaked air into his lungs. Waters of Babylon, but not wholly brackish. . . .

A woman sent you there; a woman kept you there. But it was a man's life when you got down to it.

### THE EXPUNGING.

As the flood tide filled the harbour, We stood there, hand in hand, Watching the sunset bleeding In the shining sand.

The little cheeping wavelets Came lapping, fold on fold, Before our feet, where day's death Stained the wet gold.

Silver from the moonrise, They rippled, lip by lip; Laved blood and gold together From the sandy slip.

RICHARD CHURCH.

## ON THE EDGE

## By E. CHARLES VIVIAN

ILLUSTRATED BY E. BRIAULT

"R. CARR, sir," said Savill's man, and, having got the visitor safely inside, he closed the door. But even in the three words there was a hint of resentment, of sullen dislike.

Savill knew that his man hated him, resented his being so intently alive to everything, so utterly watchful. Before he came to Savill, the man had served a master whom he could rob to his heart's content; it was only because this master—for Savill was that in the full sense of the word—was so rigidly just that the man stayed with him, though perhaps, to some extent, the magnetism of the master held the man.

In that way Savill held many men; since a certain day in his life, long past now, there was scarcely a man and certainly not a woman who really liked him. He was more machine than man, with a dynamic energy of a kind that seemed almost terrible at times; he lived for his work, served it so well that he mastered it, and, being master, could afford to ignore whether men or women hated him or loved him.

This visitor, the last on his list for the day, was lean and very bronzed, with dull, deep-set eyes that wrinkled in a smile as the door closed. He gave a half-glance back at it.

"I don't think he's in love with you, Mr. Savill," he remarked.

Savill took in the figure before him, made a mental note of this almost impertinent freedom from a stranger. But then, when men and women came to him they were in a state, generally, removed from mental normality. He dismissed the subject with a nod.

"Colonial, aren't you?" he asked.

At the tone, rather than the words, his visitor understood why Savill's man hated him. He nodded assent.

"Now tell me what is wrong with you," Savill asked.

Carr stated his case. Listening, Savill saw in the man something of what he himself had been a dozen years before; something about this youngster appealed to him more than ordinarily, but he gave no sign.

0

"Why didn't you come to me sooner?"

he asked abruptly.

His visitor made a hopeless gesture. "I was in Somaliland," he said, "and our butcher there——"

"Your what?" Savill interrupted sharply.

"Our doctor there-"

"As a fellow-butcher—never mind, though, carry on." Savill smiled as he said it, which was unusual, for him.

"Said I must come to some man like you—it was past him. I got home as soon

as I could-"

"Strip to your waist," Savill com-

He waited, made his examination. "That

will do," he said at last.

His visitor dressed himself again, and Savill weighed him up in silence. The youth and energy of the younger man, the likeness to himself as he remembered his own youth, appealed strongly now. But the manner of his gaze told his verdict—perhaps he meant to convey it in that way.

"How long?" Carr asked.

Savill eyed him still more critically. "In love with life?" He put the counter question gently, for him.

The younger man shook his head slightly. "I don't know," he said, "but . . . how

long?"

Savill hit hard and straight. "Somewhere between six months and a year, Mr. Carr," he answered evenly.

His visitor, who had stood until then, sat down. "Give me—a minute or two," he asked.

In the corner of the room a telephone bell tinkled—for the first time in two hours, Savill reflected, which was unusual. For the moment he disregarded it as he faced the younger man.

"L pass many death sentences," he said, and very few of them touch me—in my

position, I dare not let them touch me. But you—there is a likeness——"

"My people are out in Travancore,"

Carr said.

It was not the kind of likeness Savill had meant, but the place-name recalled a family of Carrs. "Of course," he said. "I was there, eight years ago. But you—"

"I was in England then," Carr said.
"I wondered if you were the same Savill.

I had a sister there, Vera——"

"Well?" Savill asked, with a slight-

"Nothing," Carr answered. "Odd that you should tell me I'm as good as a dead

man, though."

For the fourth time the telephone bell rang, an insistent, almost angry interruption. "I met her once or twice," Savill said—it had appeared, from Carr's manner, that he thought the sound of her name would create some impression, but Savill remained unmoved.

"Excuse me," he said, and turned to the

telephone.

As, in moments of stress, little things bite in deeply, so the half of a conversation that he heard bit into the doomed man's consciousness.

"Who's that?" sharply, as if resenting

the call.

"MacEvoy — ah, yes! Well — what's that? Plenty of others—my dear MacEvoy, you can get half a dozen surgeons to do it."

Carr saw him smile as he listened to the reply. Suddenly his expression changed

to grim intentness.

"Possibly," he said. "It's my speciality, in any case. Have your own anæsthetist there—yes, the G.P. And now where are you speaking from?"

The reply, inaudible to Carr, seemed to come as a shock to Savill. It was some

time before he spoke again.

"Yes, I'm here!" irritably. "Forty miles—an hour and a half, roughly, and I'll be there. Good-bye—there's no time to lose."

He hung up the receiver and turned back; it was obvious to Carr that he was stirred

unusually—shaken, perhaps.

"Two coincidences in one day," he said, and pressed a bell-push on his desk. His man appeared.

"The touring car, round at once," he

ordered.

Then as the door closed he turned to Carr, apparently recollecting with difficulty that he was not alone. "I was saying—yes, I remember, now. But there are times when it is more difficult to live."

Carr stood up, not comprehending.

"I tell you that," Savill said, "and if you understand it, you will face your sentence more easily."

"Later, perhaps," Carr answered, and

essayed a smile.

Savill looked at his watch. "Forgive me," he said. "I can do nothing for you—nobody can do anything for you—and I have ten minutes to make ready for a very grave operation. And because it is a second coincidence—my having met your people in Travancore is the first—if eleven minutes would hold up the heavens I wouldn't give the other one."

The sentenced man put down the specialist's fee, shook hands, and went out, walking heavily. Then Savill selected certain instruments which he added to those in a travelling case, took his coat and a cap, and went out. As he reached the doorstep a long touring car swung round a nearby corner and pulled up.

"Move over—I drive," he said to the

chauffeur.

He dropped his bag in the rear of the car and climbed over the spare wheel to the driving seat. The clock on the dash showed him that nine minutes had passed since he hung up the telephone receiver, and there were over forty miles between him and his destination.

So long as the traffic held him in, he stole every inch that was possible, and smiled at the chauffeur's twitching hands when he took undue risk. In his heart he knew that nothing could harm him, for he was going to a task set by fate, going as the instrument of one of time's revenges. Ordinarily, he would not have driven himself on such an errand as this, but to-day nothing could shake him, and he knew it.

Out in open country he gave the car some of his own intense vitality, and roared over switchback hills while the speedometer needle quivered within fractions of the limit. Savill knew his road as he knew the power under his hands, and all his skill went to the task of the hour; since this strange call had come for his services, he felt that nothing could spoil hand or nerve for the greater task to which he went. And there were fifteen of the allotted ninety minutes left when he braked the car o a standstill, under a balustraded terrace on

which stood a woman, tall and lean-flanked, with eyes that were blue and sometimes grev. Savill remembered those eves best with a laugh in them, but they were grave enough now.

She met him at the top of the steps leading up to the terrace. Behind her an

and his reply indicated a bond between them that was stronger than life, strong as death. Savill gazed at her hungrily, as if he would have said much, and there was in his eyes a softness that no man or woman had seen in them for nine years. "MacEvoy is with him?" The futile

question replaced what he would have said—what his eyes expressed. "I will take you to him," she answered. "He-Doctor MacEvoy -said that only you could save him."

Savill moved one step toward the door, but she restrained him with a look. He faced her again.

to let him call to you. You understand that? He said there was elsenobody

> only you." Savill looked full into her eyes and smiled. "For nine years," he said, "I have prayed just to see you again, but not

- not in this way. I thought to tell you what you had done to me, but now — just to see you."

She led him in, then, and up to the room in which MacEvoy, together with another doctor a nurse,  $\mathbf{a}$ nd waited his com-

"I will come back and tell you," he promised, pausing

as he was about to enter.

She turned back from the doorway: Savill went in.

In the long, tall-windowed room beneath, waiting, she caught the faint reek of anæsthetics, after a time, and, crouched as she was in a big arm-chair, covered her ears with her hands to shut out the incoherent



open door made a dark oblong by comparison with the summer afternoon's sunlight, a symbol of death waiting in there, while all life was outside.

"Victor," she questioned, "do I ask too much in this?"

He shook his head, sombrely. Nine years had passed since these two had spoken together, but the manner of her question cries of pain drugged to senselessnessshe knew that such cries implied no consciousness of what was passing, yet they were terrible to her. While she waited, there was no such thing as time; she bit at the padding of the chair to keep herself from shrieking, and . . . after certain eternities Savill came to her and stood until she looked up at him.

"Finished," he said. "Apart from accidents, he will live—live to be an old man.

For a time—she could not have told how long—she looked up at him in silence. In his mind was the thought of a moonlit night of nine years since, and in hers what, in such a time, is it that a woman's mind holds?

"I am only just beginning to realise what I asked, in this," she said. "It was-I

thought-"

"What?" he asked, as she left the

thought unexplained.

"Oh!"-she stood up with a swift movement-"what is the use? No explanation could alter what is. But the irony of it—that you should be called in to save him!"

"Because of what is-" Savill's voice was steady and harsh-" I could have asked nothing more. You chose him in preference to me-I give him back to you when Death claims him from you. I could have asked nothing more than that."

Her eyes, grey in this light, met his fearlessly. "Is it—am I still so much to you, Victor?" she asked, with a sort of

curious interest.

"So much"—he smiled faintly—"that I have prayed for nine years to see you —hear your voice. I have had my prayer."

"Then-?" she asked, and paused. "He will live," Savill said. He knew, now that he faced her, that he spoke a sentence on himself, little less than he had

passed on one other that day. "Victor," she told him, "they named you

well."

"I am, in this," he answered sombrely. Through another silence that was apart from time they looked into each other's eyes, and again Savill remembered a night of nine years back.

"You will come to see him again?" she

asked at last.

"To-morrow," he answered.

She gave him her hand for a brief clasp, and knew, as he knew, that there was between them a world of unspoken things

-things beyond explaining. But, as she had said, explanations were futile . . .

Savill went out, walking heavily. "You can drive back," he told the

chauffeur.

Yet, after a haze of dreams had cleared

from his mind in the next day's dawn, Savill questioned inwardly whether explanation would have been futile. She had married Featherston while he, Savill, had been away in Travancore, but . . . her eyes had told him what her lips withheld, and marriage with Featherston left her no less his in spirit. Featherston had always wanted her; Savill had known it-had laughed over it with her—in the days before he went out and left her. He had been young and unknown, then, but though Featherston with his almost unlimited wealth could give her all the material good she might ask, Savill had had no fear of the man, no question in his own mind at leaving her, for in spirit she had been his-

And then the unaccountable silence, and in the end the news that she had married Featherston! It had driven him in on himself, made of him the dynamic machine he was now; indirectly it had been responsible for his incredibly rapid rise in his profession, for he was one who did nothing by halves; all the love of which he was capable he had given to this one woman, and at her marriage he had said that he had done with women, done with men as men, and lived for work alone. Through his intense concentration on his work he had become the one man who might save Featherston's life—incidentally, the one man capable of diagnosing and pronouncing certain verdict on young Carr. And coincidence had brought him in touch with them both in the one day; how great was that coincidence he did not know, yet, though he felt it as something too incredible for fiction, though not for life.

In the afternoon he drove out again by the road he knew, the forty miles and more that led to a halt in the shadow of the stone balustrade beyond which she had waited for him, yesterday. But to-day the terrace was vacant, and he saw no sign of her anywhere; this he could understand, knowing that there were limits to his own strength. She would not meet him again: explanations were futile . . .

The general practitioner was waiting to take him up to where Featherston lay, and Savill put a couple of questions.

"I'm not quite satisfied," the other man answered. "He has got over the anæsthetic, and of course it's early days yet, but there seems to me a lack of vitality, and—as if he had something on his mind."

"Probably he has me on his mind,"

Savill said, rather grimly.

The other man looked at him, not under-

standing.

"Lack of vitality is inevitable," Savill said decidedly. "I will go up and see him."

The general practitioner moved as if to go with him. "It's not necessary," he said curtly, and went alone.

Within the room the nurse gave him her report before he went up to the bed to look at his patient. There, the sick man's eyes met his own oddly; Savill recalled the general practitioner's statement regarding something on Featherston's mind.

"Much pain, Featherston ?" he asked. From the manner of the answer he would get indications of patient's state.

"Thirst," Featherston answered weakly.

Savill nodded. "Inevitable," he said. "Three or four days

"You saved me?" Featherston asked.

"Don't talk—I've saved you if you don't

talk or make any useless exertion," Savill answered dictatorially. The man had no business to utter unnecessary words.

"You saved me." It was no longer a question, but an assertion. Savill signed for silence, but uselessly. "Margaret-I want Margaret," the sick man said. "Margaret and you-here."

"To-morrow," Savill said.

"To-day," Featherston insisted weakly.

"Look here!" Savill put all the command he knew into the words. "Unless you keep quiet, I won't be answerable for the consequences. I've saved you, if you'll save yourself-not unless."

"Because it's you-I want Margaret,

here," Featherston retorted.

"To-morrow," Savill snapped again.



"'Now you've seen Mrs. Featherston as you asked, perhaps you'll be so good as to be quiet till you're stronger.' '

"Now," Featherston contradicted. Savill shook his head inexorably.

"Now," Featherston repeated.

"You'll rest for good unless you keep quiet," Savill told him.

"Now," Featherston said again. "Mar-

garet and you, here."

It was useless to try further, Savill felt. He turned to the nurse.

"Get Mrs. Featherston to come here," he asked.

When she had gone, Savill went to the window and looked out, lest the sick man should try to talk to him. He saw the long-stretching park land about this mansion—Featherston had had everything to give her, while he was a struggling youngster. Seeing these evidences, Savill felt an old bitterness against her rise in his heart

for he was smiling wryly as Savill approached the bed again.

"Send the nurse away," he whispered. Savill shook his head at that, and turned to the nurse. "Over by the window, nurse, out of hearing of what he has to say," he bade. "But don't leave the room, please."

"Both of you—I want you both to hear," Featherston said, when the nurse had



"I won't,' Featherston said, 'and you can't make me.'

again; if she had only been content to wait! For in spirit, he felt, she was still his—he faced about at the sound of her footsteps, watched her enter. Her eyes seemed to plead with him, to reproach him for this summons.

"Your husband insisted on seeing you—I sent for you to quiet him," he explained. "If he is to live, he must be kept quiet."

Past question Featherston heard the words,

complied. "It's—because you operated, Savill."

"You mean—it hurts you to owe your life to me," Savill amplified. "Well, if you say much more, you won't need to worry about it. You haven't strength enough to talk. Now you've seen Mrs. Featherston as you asked, perhaps you'll be so good as to lie quiet till you're stronger."

"I won't," Featherston said, "and you

can't make me. I've got to tell this-you

remember Raymond Carr?"

"Raymond Carr?" Savill echoed it, startled in spite of himself, for this was the Carr on whom he had passed sentence only the day before.

"I paid Raymond Carr—when you were in Travancore—five hundred pounds to tell Margaret you were going to marry his

sister."

Featherston's gaze passed from his wife's face to Savill's, and back to her again. He saw her look at Savill, heard her little choked cry of realisation, and heard Savill's long, quivering breath.

"But my letters—she must have known -" Savill urged, and stopped. The surgeon was sunk in the man for that minute, and he forgot the danger of forcing words from one in Featherston's state.

'Easy to watch for letters in a Torquay hotel, from a foreign mail," said Featherston. "When I saw it was you, yesterday, I knew I should have to tell. It's

too-I couldn't take that-"

"And now you've told," Savill said, with brutal coldness, "perhaps you will be good enough to lie quiet. It irritates me to have my work spoilt by mere folly, and this would have kept till to-morrow-kept for all time, for all the good it can do now."

He turned from the bed. "Nurse, watch for fever," he said quietly. "Your own doctor can do all that is necessary, now,

Mrs. Featherston."

He went out without looking round, swiftly, lest he should find words forcing themselves out to the injury of the man who had confessed the slander by which he had won his wife. But down in the hall he heard Margaret call to him, and turned about.

"What is it?" he asked.

Then, seeing her, he regretted the harshness of the question.

"Victor-you see now?" she asked. "Her own brother-Vera Carr's brother told me you were engaged to marry her. And you never wrote—

In thought he could see Featherston watching every post, perhaps bribing hotel servants to make certain that no Indian letters reached her. And he remembered her unaccountable silence, up to the time when the news of her marriage to Featherston made an explanation.

"And now he owes his life to you!" she said, as if the fact impressed her anew.

Savill laughed, harshly. "Could I ask more than that?" he questioned in a way

that called for no answer. "Let that stand as his punishment—I could see how it galled him. To owe me his life after spoiling mine!"

"But yours is a great life, Victor," she urged, as if she would comfort him. "I —I can be proud of you, though I never see you again."

"But you're married to him," Savill said,

unpityingly.

Ah, don't you see?" she cried. believed Carr-I had no reason for disbelieving him. And I wrote to you to ask if it were true, but no answer came. I had nothing left, and he was good to me-"

"Good to you!" Savill echoed bitterly. "I had nothing left," she said again.

"Neither had I," Savill reminded her.

"It's different for a man," she urged. "He didn't ask love of me-only to be good to me. He has been good to me-

"And now?" he asked.

The door of the room in which she had waited yesterday stood open; she passed through into the long, high-windowed apartment, and Savill followed her. "And now?" he asked again.

"Now," she looked at him fearlessly, "to go on-there is no other way. To keep myself worth the love you once gave

me. No other way."
"Margaret," Savill said gently, "you have it still—you will have it always, now. I thought—what could I think ?—but now I have my faith in you given back to me. Life will be different."

"Apart from me," she reminded him.

He took her hand and lifted it to his lips. "You are too fine to soil, my dear,"

They heard hurrying footsteps without the room. A servant broke in on them.

"Madam—the doctor sent me for you. At once, he said."

Savill went with her up the stair. The old general practitioner looked up from the bed, and Margaret caught sight of her husband's face before Savill thrust her back.

"I bought you!" Featherston cried out—the nurse was holding him down. "Bought you-and now to leave you to him! Here on the edge-"

He stilled suddenly, and Savill shook his

head.

"Impossible," the other doctor said. "Hæmorrhage for a certainty."

Savill went up to the bed, and Featherston's wife followed. There was agony in Featherston's eyes as he saw them, though Savill reckoned him past physical pain, after such an outburst.

"Quixotism," he whispered. "If I hadn't

been on the edge-"

"What does he mean?" his wife asked in too low a voice for him to hear.

Savill silenced her with a gesture as he stood looking down at the man before him. The nurse withdrew her hands-it was evident that Featherston no longer needed to be held. And probably for her, as for the two doctors, it was easy to see how life relaxed its hold, after the paroxysm in which Featherston had ruined Savill's work on him.

Death came so quietly and imperceptibly that no one of the watching four knew the instant of his passing. But after an interval Savill moved.

"Cover the face, nurse," he said, and led

Margaret away.

Autumn was old when Savill faced Mar-

garet again, in the long, high-windowed room where she had waited to learn the result of his work. He took her hands and held them, making her face him.

"You know why I came?" he asked. She nodded assent—words would not

come, for the moment.

"And you may think I have waited a long time," he went on gravely. "But, that day, we saw all the ugliness of a man's soul. I wanted to give you time to erase the thoughts of it, lest—lest I should seem impatient or inconsiderate."

She smiled. "Are you impatient?"

she asked.

"Margaret," he said, with an abrupt change of manner, "come away from this place. Forget it-let us never see it again! Come away."

She slipped into his waiting arms, full

compensation for the empty years.
"Take me," she said. "Oh, my dear, "Take me," she said. take me where you will!"

### HOME AT NIGHT.

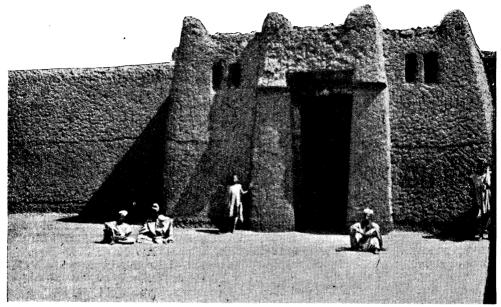
MAN may find a morning joy In granite walls down some dim street, A man may find a noontime peace Through wood paths spread for tired feet,

And on high-hearted afternoons May love a white road down the land That leads where little towns are set Like jewels on a silver band;

But oh, I think, when night comes down. The one who set himself to roam, Will turn half wistfully to look Along the highroad leading home-

When other men's home lights are lit, And small roofs gleam where stars shine white, There is no man who does not want His own roof over him at night.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.



ARCHITECTURE IN KANO, THOUGH THE MATERIAL IS ONLY RED CLAY SOIL.

## THE RED-WALLED CITY OF KANO

## THE GREAT EMPORIUM OF CENTRAL AFRICA •

By ANGUS BUCHANAN, M.C., F.R.S.G.S.

With photographs by the Author.

ITHOUT doubt the picturesque and remarkable walled city of Kano, in Northern Nigeria, deserves to be more widely known, for it is the premier city of the Western Sudan, easily eclipsing the far-famed romance-surrounded Timbuktu. It is curious that Timbuktu, once Kano's sister city in importance as a great African centre of caravan-carried trade, is a household name throughout the world, while greater Kano remains compar-

atively little known. African chroniclers have done well by Timbuktu, but Kano has, as a rule, escaped their attention. This may be because Kano was "discovered" late in life, so to speak. It was so recently as 1903 that Kano surrendered to an armed force and came under British administration, and it was not until 1911 that the Nigerian Railway pushed North to reach the great Hausa metropolis that to-day prospers at "the end of the line."

In this connection it is well to bear in mind that European influence throughout Nigeria is very modern. For instance, the chronicled events of Lagos, the West Coast seaport base of the railway to Kano, tells us that:

"In 1704 Europeans, chiefly Portuguese, reached Lagos. in the reign of Akinsemoyin, and foreign slave trade began. 'In 1851 Queen Victoria sent an English Consul to Kosoko, King of Lagos, to convey to him that it would be Her Majesty's great pleasure to see that he put down slave trade in his kingdom and to sign a treaty with Great Britain. . . . Kosoko refused to sign such a treaty, and the British officers left Lagos.

"In January, 1853, King Akitoye, who had been deposed

by Kosoko, after defeating the latter's army with the assistance of English forces, re-ascended the throne and shortly after made a treaty with the English in which it was laid down that the slave trade must no longer be practised."1

From that time the white man's advance into the interior was gradual but ever accelerating, and in the end the great Hausa provinces to the extreme north gave over their tribal feuds and threw in their fortunes with the new civilization from the south that offered attractive markets to a race primarily possessed with keen instincts for trade.

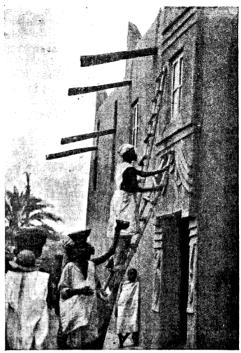
The coming of the white man, however, did not deprive the Emirs of their rule nor interfere with the laws and customs of the natives, and the country continued with but little political change except that it was under British protection.

It is on that account that Kano remains a

1 History of Lagos. John B. Losi.



POUNDING GRAIN FOR THE DAY'S REQUIREMENTS-THE HOUSEWIFE'S DAILY OCCUPATION.



WORKMEN FINISHING A MUD DWELLING IN KANO.

native city pure and simple, and to this day no foreigner is allowed to live within its great red walls. Wherefore the European settlement of Government officials traders is near the railway station, a short mile from the native city, while other settle-

ments for foreign native traders and negroes from the coast are also separate from Kano, and from each other. In this way the great native city, administered by its own Emir and officials under British supervision, has remained unspoilt by European influence in all the picturesqueness of a great Oriental city, for, though in Africa, Kano is characteristic of the East. The growth and importance of the city is due to the position it long occupied as the central distributor of trade from the north and as the collecting point of caravans from all over the Western Sudan. With the gradual passing of the trans-Saharan trade Kano has been fortunate in having the railway come from the coast to its very door, so that its importance as a market has increased rather than decreased, as has been the case with Timbuktu.

The genius of the Hausa people for commerce rendered their city so large and important that the walls by which they enclosed it and defended their great market are nearly eleven miles in length, enclosing an area of seven and a quarter miles. This gigantic barrier, effectually shutting in the city from the outside world, rises to a height of some thirty feet and is of tremendous width at its base (forty feet in places). The entire wall is made of red sun-dried mud as hard as stone, pierced at intervals by deep gates flanked by bastions. There are thirteen gates in the walls of Kano. The whole enclosure is so colossal that one cannot but be filled with amazement when endeavouring to estimate the labour and enthusiasm that the Hausa kings and their slaves and subjects must have put into the work in days gone by. The walls are now, in places, falling into decay as the vital need for them has passed and order reigns in this prosperous land which, before the British occupation, was continually subject to plundering and slave-raids from the north and east and to internal strife between local Emirs

To comprehend the primitive, yet intellectual, atmosphere that envelops native Kano one must try to picture it as a strange old-world fortressed city of historical antiquity and of Babylonian character.

"According to oral tradition the earliest inhabitants



A HAUSA MAN.



A HAUSA WOMAN.

were a race now referred to as Abagayawa. A few families in Kano, the men of which are generally blacksmiths, still call themselves by this name. Their legend is that one of their ancestors, a smith called Kano, came from Gaiya (S.E. of Kano) in search of iron-stone and settled near Dalla Hill when the present site of the town was uninhabited. The date when Kano was founded is uncertain.

"The first ruler of Kano, recorded in the 'Kano Chronicle,' was Bagoda, who became 'Sarki' of Kano in

999 A.D.

"Kano was probably at the height of its power during the reign of Mohammed Rumfa (1463-99). He built or laid out the palace in which the Emir now lives.

"The first recorded emissaries of Islam arrived in Kano during Rumfa's reign, but it is probable that even before this time the Mohammedan religion had obtained a footlold."

The history of Kano is that of a storm-centre of tribal and religious wars almost up to the time of the British occupation in 1903. And the background is important, for it is out of that wild turbulent past that the strength and majesty of Kano has grown, and, possibly, something of the character of its industrious, intelligent people.

To-day Kano of the red walls, red houses and red street-lanes is a throbbing centre of prosperous trading; the ugly days of

war are past.

There are some sixty thousand inhabitants in Kano, chiefly Hausa natives of Mohammedan faith; and a population of nearly three millions in the province of the same name, of which it is the capital. These numbers are worth more than a passing note to



A HAUSA WOMAN.

those of us who believe that the native of to-morrow is going to think more and to think more rapidly than he has in the past. The Hausa people are acknowledged to be one of the finest native races in the world, and their commercial ability, as seen in Kano to-day, is such as to astonish all who are unfamiliar with their character and bright intelligence.

Thousands of square miles are under native cultivation in the Province of Kano, and a large portion of the produce naturally comes into the markets of the great Hausa trading-centre. Ground-nuts are the chief source of wealth to the agriculturist; next to them hides and skins. There are about a million head of big-horn cattle in the province, half a million sheep, and two and a half million goats.

Next to the insufficient rainfall, the most formidable enemies to crops, especially to standing millet, are locusts. Pleuropneumonia and rinderpest are prevalent diseases among the cattle, and aggravated outbreaks sometimes destroy great numbers.

Within the walls of Kano thousands of low dwellings line the dusty, twisting street-lanes of the city; all built of red mud. The colour effect is at once arresting. The blue sky above, the green trees in the bazaar thoroughfares, and the red house walls provide the light and colour in which the man

of tropical Africa delights and to which he owes so much of his childlike gaiety, be he native of Hausaland or negro of the Coast. To the stranger the profusion of colour in the markets of Kano, under a westering sun, presents scenes quaint, unique and unforgettable; the whole enlivened by tremendous movement.

The hour to explore Kano is in the late afternoon, when the great heat of day begins to relax. That is the hour when the dozing, heat-oppressed populace awake to throbbing life. It is then that graceful, gaily-robed native men and women hurry in from all quarters to the market centre, with baskets of wares carried easily on their heads, or driving before them laden dun-coloured donkeys or lean-ribbed big-boned oxen, while the hum of many voices tells where the multitude are gathering.

In the markets the wares are set out on the ground within allotted spaces, while the grave gown-clad Hausa merchants kneel beside them and do business with the chattering, bargaining crowd who crush about them in their hundreds. For the most part the wares are native, and you may single out baskets of raw cotton, bobbins of home-spun thread, and stout "Kano cloth," the weaving and dyeing of which is the greatest local industry. It is estimated that there are 82,000 men in the Province who weave cotton and that about 50,000 are employed



A HAUSA WOMAN.



PROFESSIONAL DANCERS IN HAUSALAND.

in dyeing the cloth, which is the chief wearing apparel of the Hausa people.

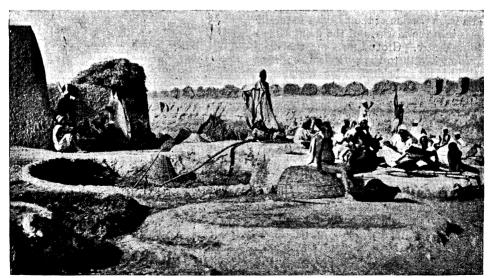
The sale of hides and leather-work, basketwork and pottery are other industries of importance that bring wares to the market, while tailors and blacksmiths do flourishing business in their little open-air bazaars. The food-stalls are chiefly filled with such staple produce as millet, guinea corn, maize, and beans, exposed for sale in calabash bowls or grass-woven baskets. In lesser quantity are tomatoes, onions, yams, sugarcanes, and the pepper pods and herb leaves that go to complete the local pottage condiments.

The meat market is set apart, which is wise, for it is fly-ridden and evil-smelling.

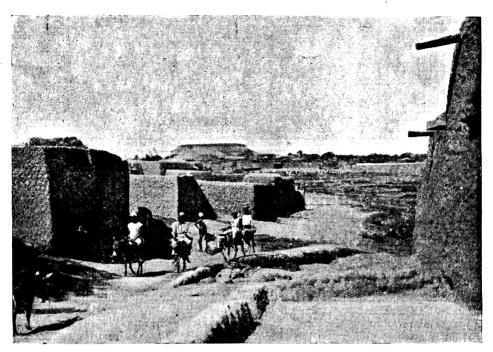
In that quarter beef and mutton and choice parts of offal (of which natives are particularly fond) are exposed for sale; sometimes already rotting in the hot temperature, even though recently killed.

The merchants of the stalls are Hausa townsmen and a few Arabs. But in the cattle-market, which is also on one side, the natives are chiefly Fulani and Beri-Beri bush-men, who have brought in cattle, sheep, goats and camels from the distant scrubby pasture where their herds roam.

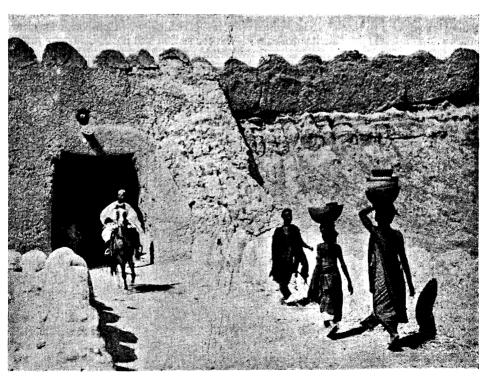
There are also horses for sale in the cattlemarket; high-mettled, Arab-like beasts that are very attractive, but unfortunately they are very often gone at the houghs, through the stupid native habit of throwing a



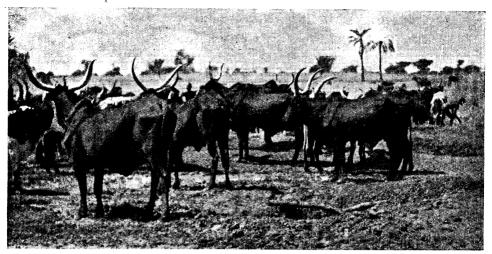
DYE-PITS IN KANO.



A VIEW OF KANO CITY, THE GREAT HAUSA CAPITAL OF THE WESTERN SUDAN.



ONE OF THE THIRTEEN GATES IN THE WALLS OF KANO,



THE BIG-HORN CATTLE OF NORTHERN NIGERIA,

galloping horse suddenly back on its hindquarters on hard ground to make a dramatic halt before an audience or a king's house, by means of pressure on the locally-made cruel bit-iron which projects on to the roof of the mouth.

From the foregoing it will be gathered that the native market of Kano is well equipped to supply the wants of the primitive people. Indeed, the whole interchange of trading is so extensive that there is a wholesome buying and selling within its own circle which employs almost everyone and makes the city self-supporting and self-sufficient.

The market within the old city, in its entirety, is the everyday mart of the inhabitants and does not greatly concern the white traders, who buy, at their own warehouses  $_{
m the}$ European segregation outside the walls, their stacks of hides and tons of ground-nuts and beans, which are the rich exports from the place. There is also some European

trade in cattle and sheep, which are railed for the consumption of people at "down country" stations on the Coast.

When the sun sets it is time for the white stranger to move on from the market-place and return to European quarters outside, leaving the red-walled city to its native privacy. The loitering crowd that presses about the stalls is so dense that it is difficult to pass through it, and the din of eager voices is deafening. However, once clear of the congestion and noise, it is very pleasant walking or riding home under the spell of peaceful closing day. Hundreds of natives

are still on the dusty roads, arriving joyfully at the journey's end with burdened animals from distant parts, or coming from fields and villages near-by when the work of the day is finished: all gladly and contentedly returning home, or coming to a haven of rest, while the sound of pounding pestle-poles in wooden mortars resounds methodically in



A POTTERY BAZAAR IN KANO.

the still air to declare to all ears that industrious housewives are preparing the evening meal.

You may hear also, about this time, the monotonous sound of tom-toms arising from some groups of hutments, and the loud voice of a functionary raised in peculiar declaration to call forth neighbours; from which it may be understood that there is gaiety afoot in a household where a wedding-dance is starting. Such sounds on the evening air are pleasant, as are all sounds close to nature when they are explanatory of familiar things and the joy of life to one

who is overtaxed with the silence of the lone places, as are many men of the caravan and of the bush who drift into Kano from afar.

Passing through a shadowed gateway, named Nassarawa, in the eastern wall, you may leave the strange old city behind in the dusk and take the straight road to the white man's town, while snow-white flocks of cattle-egrets fly gracefully and softly across the eve-lit sky to their night grounds, and satiated vultures and kites clamber heavily to their roosting-perches on gnarled old solitary trees.

#### PERSPECTIVE.

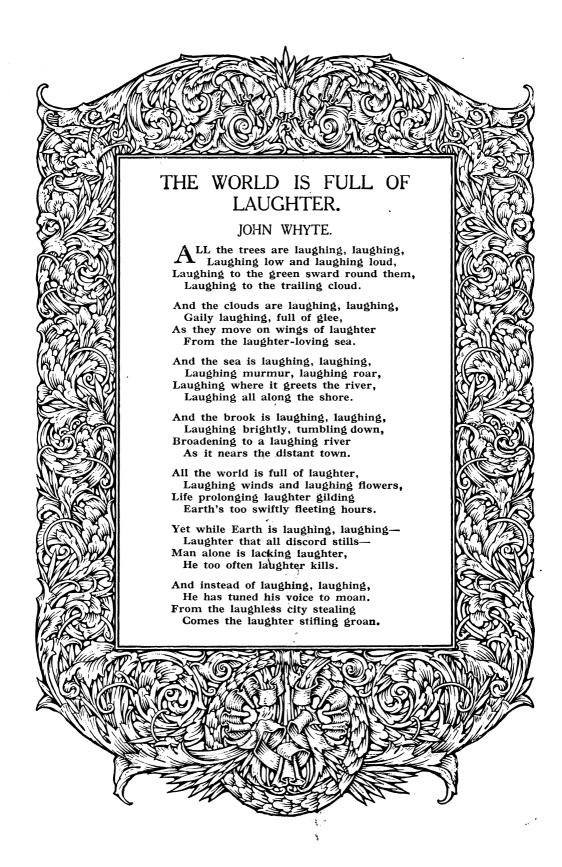
WHEN I am tired of my small house,
Sick at the sight of everything,
One night—quiet as a mouse—
I'll steal outside; then hurrying
I'll cross the road and climb the hill,
Over the fields I'll go, until
Across the valley I can see
My little house awaiting me.

Field upon lonely field will lie
Bleak in the moonlight, cold and bare;
The trees will lift green fingers high
And sigh and rustle everywhere;
And the deep-bosomed hills will be
Too grand and great to comfort me.

The quiet lands will lie below
With dreaming dark and frowning height,
Mile upon mile where I must go
Alone and lonely through the night.
But, in the centre of it all,
I'll see a beacon, a gold star,
Winking and friendly, bright and small,
Lovable and familiar.
My window shines! And I shall see
The dear way that the walls are set,
The pleasant curve of my roof-tree,
The dreaming porch that never yet
Has failed to welcome heartily
The kindly folk who visit me!

Then I'll rush home, and shut the door, And love my little house once more.

DEREK G. BARNES.



# THEHEATHERINGTONNECKLACE

#### By ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

"COUSIN SYLVIA, do you see that nice clergyman sitting by himself at the table in the window?"

Lady Heatherington turned her long neck, and raised her still longer lorgnette: "Oh! yes: I've seen him before, and wondered who he was, he is so exceptionally good-looking. I'm sure he is a nice man, because he looks so charming; and no one as good-looking as he is could be

anything but altogether delightful. Do you know him, Norma?"

Norma Summerton, Lady Heatherington's poor cousin and paid companion, nodded her head: "Yes: I played tennis with him one day at the public tennis courts, and we've met several times in the pump-room and the gardens since. He told me he is a curate somewhere in the Midlands, and has come here for his holiday because he is inclined to be rheumatic, and he thinks a course of the baths and waters might do him good. He is most awfully nice to talk to; quite as nice as he looks."

"People always are, don't you think, Norma? I am a great believer in Lavengro, or some such person, who taught that the only true way to judge people's character is by their faces: to me it is the only sure guide." This was a very comforting doctrine to Lady Heatherington, whose face had always told a far more flattering tale than either her conduct or her conversation: those who judged her by her face alone had always proved to be her most lenient judges.

Norma, however, looked doubtful: "I'm not sure of that—I don't know that the best-looking people are always the best

people. And the man you mean wasn't called Lavengro but Lavater."

"I dare say, darling: I have always such a wretched memory for names. And after all, what does the name matter if you know what I mean? It is such a mistake to trouble about details such as names, when all that really matters is the inner meaning of things."

Norma looked perplexed: she was not the first person who had been puzzled by her cousin's vapourings: but as Sylvia Heatherington was a rich as well as a beautiful woman, people made a show of listening to and understanding the nonsense she was so fond of talking. "But if you call things and people by their wrong names, it is so difficult for the person you are talking to to know what you are talking about."

"Not at all, dear child: truly sympathetic natures can understand one another without the clumsy medium of words. But tell me more about your handsome clergyman."

Nothing loth, the girl proceeded: "His name is Ambrose Wilmot, and he isn't at all an old-fashioned sort of clergyman: in fact, if it wasn't for his clerical clothes you'd never know he was a clergyman at all. He is so broad and free and modern, and has such nice cheerful views."

"What sort of views? I love people with views."

"Oh! he thinks that all the old-fashioned faiths are quite out of date, and that it doesn't matter what we believe as long as we are kind to one another, and try to make the world a pleasanter place than we found it. He says our duty is to look as beautiful and to live as beautifully as we

can: and that all the rest is mere eye-wash."

"Ah! how true; and how broadminded of a parson to realise it!" Lady Heatherington liked this programme, she found it so easy to follow: at least the former half was easy to her, as all the world could see: and in her own mind she believed the second part was followed by her with equal success—which came to the same thing, as far as she was concerned. "Is he staying in this hotel?" she added.

"No," replied Norma: "he comes here for his meals, but he can't afford to stay here altogether: he is sleeping in a bungalow beside the river which he got very cheap for a few weeks. But as he has no servants he takes all his meals out, and only goes

to his bungalow to sleep."

"But how peaceful and primitive! It must feel so restful to sleep all by oneself in a bungalow, and to hear nothing but the river murmuring in its sleep. A million times nicer than sleeping in this noisy hotel. And now, Norma, I must go and rest before my next needle-bath; and leave you to amuse yourself with your handsome clergyman."

Lady Heatherington was staying for the sake of her health-which was already perfect—at Willington Spa. She loved taking baths and drinking waters: they made her feel so important: and though her beauty and her wealth already afforded her as much importance as would have satisfied a normal woman, she somehow never felt quite important enough. Therefore she summoned the aid of fictitious illness to strengthen the already adequate forces of rank and wealth and beauty. Sylvia Heatherington was beautiful by nature; but rich and noble by grace—or (to be more accurate) by marriage. Her own people had possessed neither rank nor wealth; and thus it came to pass that her young cousin, Norma Summerton, was very grateful to accept a modest and well-earned salary as companion to the beautiful and capricious Lady Heatherington. But though Norma had shared her cousin's natal poverty, she had not inherited any trace of that cousin's dower of beauty; and—as a poor and plain girl—found life anything but an easy job; in fact, between the two millstones of her cousin's selfish wealth, and her own immediate family's equally selfish poverty, poor Norma's existence was a very hard and strenuous affair indeed.

She was grateful for any scraps of amusement that came her way, and the conversation of Ambrose Wilmot had proved a specially delightful scrap: but she could not enjoy it as she might have done at another time, as just now the demands of an extravagant and unsatisfactory father and an ailing and dissatisfied mother were worrying the poor child a great deal.

For several days after the above conversation life progressed pleasantly enough for the two cousins, who were respectively cheered but not inebriated by mineral waters on the one hand and Mr. Wilmot's conversation on the other: and then the hotel was shaken to its foundations by Lady Heatherington's discovery that the celebrated Heatherington necklace—which she had brought with her to Willington Spa, on her way from her London season to a round of visits in Scotland—had been stolen out of her jewel-case. Terrible indeed was her distress; and she kept her maid and Norma continually on the run between the Telegraph Office and the Police Station, enlisting the resources of civilisation in the search. Lord Heatherington, who was travelling abroad at the time, was notified and sent for; and all the usual ritual connected with a robbery was enacted: but so far with no success. The necklace had vanished, and remained vanished, in spite of all the efforts to discover it.

Norma was much upset about it all, and poured out her distress to Mr. Wilmot; who in return gave her abundant sympathy and any amount of good advice about "keeping her pecker up" and not "letting any old thing worry her," in his usual breezy style. She found him a great comfort; and she needed comfort just then, because her ladyship was particularly bad-tempered and hysterical—as indeed she had every excuse for being: the diamond necklace was not only very valuable in itself, but was also an heirloom in the Heatherington family; and Lord Heatherington had frequently warned his wife against the folly of taking such a valuable possession to an hotel. And this time she knew she had been specially culpable, as not only had she taken the necklace to an hotel, but had declined to put it in charge of the management, although Norma had begged her to do so as soon as they arrived. But she regarded this as Norma's "fussiness," and insisted that the jewel-case was safe enough in her own bedroom; and added that she meant to keep it there anyhow, and that she wished Norma would mind her own business. Which accordingly Norma was obliged to do.

But Norma was very unhappy about it all, and found her only comfort and support in the conversation of Ambrose Wilmot. Into his sympathetic ear she poured the story of her difficult life with her cousin, and her still more difficult life in the poverty and misery of her own home. She told him how her parents were always nagging her for money, though she already gave them nearly the whole of her small salary; of how stingy Lady Heatherington was in

go calmly on your way, and think beautiful thoughts, all will come right in the end."

"But how can I go calmly on my way and think beautiful thoughts when everything is so horrid and miserable? You don't know how hateful it is to be poor."

Ambrose emitted a faint whistle. "Don't

I, though? None better."

"And how dreadful it is to feel your own people are so poor also," added Norma, with tears in her eyes.

"Oh! I don't bother about my own people: they have to look after themselves.



"'Oh, no; not prison! I could not go to prison!""

spite of her wealth; and of how difficult Norma found it to convince her parents that it was impossible for her to do more for them than she was already doing. And now a fresh woe had to be added to her heavy burden: her favourite brother had got badly into debt, and threatened to shoot himself unless Norma could send him enough to pay off his most pressing creditors. Then on the top of all this came the loss of Lady Heatherington's diamonds, and Norma seemed almost beside herself.

"Don't worry," urged Mr. Wilmot; "above all things don't worry. If only you

It's as much as I can do to make ends meet as it is; and if I can't make my own ends meet, I can't make other people's."

"But you said kindness was the one thing that really mattered," argued Norma,

gulping down a sob.

"So it is, my dear child; but you can't be kind unless you've got something to be kind with. Still, if you keep on saying to yourself, 'Everything is all right,' everything will turn out all right in the end. Mark my words it will."

And then Ambrose wandered off into the vague sort of talk that Norma found so comforting; and for a time she forgot her troubles in the joy of his conversation.

But the next morning she came to him as he was smoking his pipe in the hotel garden immediately after breakfast, and said she must speak to him privately at once: so they strolled off into the woods, and he begged her to unburden her mind.

"I can't keep it up any longer," said the girl, her voice broken with sobs. "I've lain awake all night feeling that I ought to tell you everything, you being a clergyman and so good and kind to me: so I've come to confess to you that it was I who took Cousin Sylvia's necklace, and to ask you what I ought to do about it."

Wilmot stood still, quite stunned with amazement. "You took the diamonds! You!"

"Yes; I don't wonder you are horrified: I am horrified myself. But it was such a temptation when I saw them lying in the jewel-case, and Tom kept writing that if I didn't help him to pay his debts he should shoot himself. And I felt the Heatheringtons were so rich they couldn't really miss the money, and it would make all the difference in the world to Tom."

The girl was fairly crying now. "I know how you must loathe and despise me," she went on; "I loathe and despise myself; and now I repent of what I did, and have come to you to help me to undo it."

By that time Wilmot's astonishment allowed him to speak. "I don't loathe and despise you: far from it, poor child! But I must think over what is best for you to do."

"I knew you would help me, Mr. Wilmot, you are so good and wise. It was because you talked to me so beautifully that I realised the awfulness of what I had done: and I felt sure you would help me to put things right."

"I'll do anything I can to help you. But first tell me how you managed to hide the necklace all these days when the place

was searched."

"There is a little secret drawer in my dressing-case that nobody knows of, and I hid the necklace there."

"Good gracious! To think that you

had the thing all the time!"

"Oh! it is such a comfort to have told you and to know I have got you to help me. And now you will tell me what I am to do next. I will obey you whatever you say."

Wilmot's forehead was wrinkled with perplexity. "You must be quiet for a time

and let me think things out. I cannot advise you straight off."

Norma gladly obeyed him. Her relief was so great at having confessed her sin and shifted the burden of it to other shoulders, that she was willing to do anything: and she had such unbounded faith in Mr. Wilmot that she felt sure he would put everything straight again. So she dried her eyes and walked beside him in silence, whilst he wrestled with the problem she had set before him.

After a time he broke the silence. "Of course your first impulse will be to go straight to your cousin and give her back the necklace: but if you do that it will involve you in a lot of quite unnecessary explanations."

Norma looked up at him, her eyes filled with gratitude: "I know; Cousin Sylvia will be awfully angry, and that is what I am dreading."

Wilmot felt a passing irritation at the girl's simplicity. "It is not only that she will be angry: that is a matter of little moment; but the affair is no longer private—it has been put into the hands of the police—and therefore the law, having been started, is bound to carry on. Which will end, unless I am very much mistaken, in your being sent to prison."

Norma began to cry again. "Oh, no; not prison! I could not go to prison! And surely they would forgive me if I made a clean breast of the whole affair."

"The law can't forgive: that's the nuisance of it; but I'll tell you what I advise to get you out of the mess. Bring the necklace to me without saying anything to anybody: and then I'll give it back to Lady Heatherington, making up some tale of how I picked it up in the woods, where the real thief had probably dropped it in escaping with his booty."

Norma gave a sigh of relief. "And do you think Cousin Sylvia will believe you?"

"Not for a moment: but she'll be so glad to get the necklace back that she won't worry about the identity of the thief. In fact, nobody will, when once the necklace is recovered."

"Oh, how good and clever you are! I knew you would help me." And there was positive adoration in the eyes that Norma lifted to Mr. Wilmot's face.

"All you have to do is to meet me at this particular spot in the woods this evening, bringing the necklace with you: and then you can wash your hands of the whole affair. I will see to the rest. But remember never to let anybody know that you took the necklace. You haven't told anybody but me, have you?"

"No, nobody."

"Then never do. You secret is safe with me: and if it is equally safe with yourself, your troubles are over. And now we'd better separate until after dinner this evening, or else people will wonder what we are talking about."

Punctually at the appointed hour Norma drew the stolen treasure out of its hiding-place, and—thrusting it in her bosom—proceeded to keep her tryst in the woods. Wilmot was there before her, and lost no time in relieving her of her ill-gotten gains, and transferring them to his own pocket.

"And you will give the necklace back to Cousin Sylvia at once, and promise never, never to let her know that it was I who

stole it?" Norma begged.

"Of course I promise: I'll swear if you like that your secret will be for ever safe with me. And look here, child: let this be a lesson to you never again to stray from the path of honesty. I shall be leaving here shortly, and that is my parting piece of advice to you."

Norma's face fell. "Oh, I am so sorry you are going away soon! I hoped you would be staying as long as we are. But you won't forget to give Cousin Sylvia the necklace before you go; or to write to me when you get back to your Midland parish?"

"I shall forget nothing: you can depend upon that. But we won't say good-bye, now, as I shall be seeing you again in the morning. Good night, and cheer up, and be thankful that all your troubles are over."

"Indeed I am more thankful than I can express to you who have come to my rescue and saved me from the consequences of my own folly and wrong-doing. And I will show my gratitude to you by never doing such a thing again as long as I live."

"Then that's all right. So long." And thus the two conspirators parted, going their separate ways; and neither was conscious that a man, who had been hiding in the shadows of the undergrowth, had heard every word that they said, and observed their every action.

Late that night Ambrose Wilmot was packing up his belongings in his bungalow by the river, in readiness for his departure on the morrow; and in the midst of his packing he stopped to see that Lady Heath-

erington's necklace was safe, and to admire its unusual beauty and brilliance. Whilst he was gazing at it, he heard a slight sound, and upon looking up was horrified to see a big, powerfully-built man stepping in through the window.

Ambrose was alone in the bungalow—he was unarmed—and he was about four stone lighter and four inches shorter than the stranger: so he realised that he was in a tight place.

"Excuse my intrusion," said the stranger, quite pleasantly; "but may I trouble you to hand me over that necklace?"

Wilmot blustered a little, though he fully realised the futility of it. "I shall do no such thing. It is my property."

The stranger smiled. "Hardly; or else I shouldn't have asked you for it."

"And what right have you to invade my privacy in this way, I should like to know?"

"None—none whatever. But I thought it might save incidental trouble and unpleasantness if you handed over the necklace to me here and now, and I relieved you of all responsibility concerning it. I happened to be present, though unseen—hidden in the bushes to be accurate—during your interview with Miss Summerton in the woods this evening, and so was cognisant of the whole transaction."

"And if I refuse to hand over the neck-lace here and now?"

"I shall take it," replied the big man with his imperturbable smile; "the result will be the same, but the process distinctly less agreeable from your point of view."

Wilmot saw that he had no chance whatever against this formidable adversary: so capitulated. "Look here," he said; "let us come to terms. I'm no more a parson than you are—I'm a professional crook—and I came here in this disguise to get hold of Lady Heatherington's necklace. I was in luck's way, and that Summerton kid did the trick for me: and now I'm about to make a bolt of it. But I'll play fair if you will. I'll let you have half the goods if you'll let me go off quietly with the other half. That's a fair offer, man to man."

"Most generous," replied the big man with a laugh. "I don't know whether it does your head or your heart more credit. I cannot tell you how deeply I regret being unable to accept it."

"Cut the cackle," said Wilmot, losing his temper. "I'm not in a mood to stand

rotting, I can tell you. I've made you a fair offer—half the stuff, and no tattling on either side—and both of us miles away by to-morrow morning with a clear thirty thousand between us, and no

down on the only unoccupied chair in the room.

"Look here," he said, "all this is very irregular and most improper and highly



Lord Heatherington, you see, and the necklace belongs to me."

Wilmot sank down in his chair, his face as white as a sheet. He knew the game was up at last. "Take the dashed things," he exclaimed, throwing them down on the table, "and take me too. I'll go quietly with you to the Police Station. There's no good showing fight against a big strong chap like you."

Lord Heatherington slipped the necklace into his pocket, but he did not attempt to touch the other man: instead he sat unjustifiable from every point of view. I know

I ought to accept at once your kind invitation to accompany you to the Police Station: but hang it all! I don't feel so superior to you that I can claim it as my privilege to hand you over to justice."

The perspiration stood in beads on Wilmot's white forehead, and he moistened his lips with his tongue. "What are you driving at now?" he managed to ask.

"This is what I am driving at; I am in the same boat as yourself. A few months ago I was temporarily short of ready money—through my own folly and extravagance, mind you!—and pawned the Heatherington necklace without her ladyship's knowledge, putting a paste imitation in its place."

"Then the necklace I have pinched is a

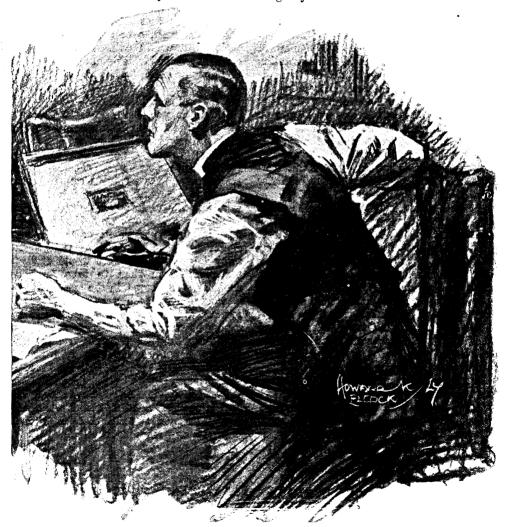
fake?" gasped Wilmot.

"Precisely; and that was my reason for recovering it in such an irregular manner. Had the police got hold of it in the conventional way, the fact that it was a fake would have inevitably been discovered; and then I—as well as yourself—would

actly. Technically, I should have got off more lightly than you, but I don't see that morally there would have been much to choose between us. Anyway, I should much prefer to keep the whole thing dark. So I will accept part of your generous offer and say nothing further about your share in the transaction, if you will do the same regarding mine."

Wilmot rose shakily to his feet. "I am most grateful to your lordship; more grateful than I can say. I shall never

forget your kindness."



"'Take the dashed things,' he exclaimed, throwing them down on the table, 'and take me too."

have been more or less in the soup."

"Still, they couldn't cop you for pawning your own diamonds, my lord."

Lord Heatherington smiled. "Not ex-

"If it would do any good, I should advise you to show your gratitude by keeping clear of such affairs in the future, and going straight: it is the best policy in the end,

believe me: but I know you won't listen to me, and I don't think that I'm the man to preach to you if you would. But I'll wish you good luck; and add a rider on my own account that the luck will come to you by honest means."

"Thank you, my lord. And you'll explain to Miss Summerton what a rotter I am, even if you don't tell her exactly

what I've done."

Lord Heatherington rose from his chair: "I shall do nothing of the kind. I shall let her go on believing that you are the parson you pretended to be, and I shall say that you handed the necklace to me: which you did. No, Wilmot-or whatever your real name is, which is no business of mine—there are worse things than stealing diamond necklaces, and one of them is destroying the faith and betraying the trust of those who believe in you. Miss Summerton believes in you—let her go on believing in you, as she is never likely to see you again. That her belief in you is misplaced is your affair, not hers. The necklace you stole is a fake: Miss Summerton's faith is a real thing: do not embitter the rest of her life by shattering it. Good night and good luck!" Thereupon Lord Heatherington stepped out of the window into the night, and Wilmot saw him no more.

The next day Lady Heatherington's heart was filled with joy when her husband restored to her the necklace, telling her that Wilmot had found it hidden in a hole in the woods, where the real thief had probably secreted it until the first hue and cry should be over: and adding that Wilmot asked him to give a message of farewell to her and Norma, as he had been obliged to leave earlier than he anticipated.

Norma said little at the time: but in the afternoon—when her cousin was safely resting—she came to that cousin's husband and poured the whole story into his sympathetic ears. He did not let her guess that he had heard it before: but he spoke kindly and faithfully to her, and promised to pay Tom's debts, if she in her turn would promise never to do such a thing again.

"It was Mr. Wilmot that made me see how wicked I had been, and he also showed me how to put things straight again. He

is a good man.

"If it hadn't been for him," Norma continued, "I should have gone from bad to worse, and become a regular thief." And she began to cry again.

"There, there, don't cry: and don't ever do such a horrible thing again. Be thankful that you met Wilmot in the nick of time; and turn over a new leaf."

"Oh! I will, I will. But I do wish I could have seen Mr. Wilmot again to explain to him how much he had done for me and how grateful I am."

"I think he understood."

"And do you think I ought to confess my crime to Cousin Sylvia? I'll do what-

ever you say is right."

"No; certainly not. You were quite right to tell me, as you see the necklace was really mine: and I think I can understand the state of mind which induced you to take it. But Sylvia wouldn't understand. She believes in you: and if she lost her faith in you she would never believe in you again. And to me it seems that to take away her faith and trust would really do her more harm than to take away her necklace. Of course, in the eyes of the law it wouldn't be such a criminal act: but morally I think it would be a worse one. I may be wrong: but for my part I think to betray another person's trust, and to destroy her faith, is the very worst sort of crime that one can commit. No, my dear Norma: with your permission, we will not tell Sylvia. As you have heard, 'least said is soonest mended': and when nothing whatsoever is said, there is often no need for any mending at all."

#### FEBRUARY.

OH sweet day smiling on the edge of spring, I know 'twas not in vain

I waited through the dying of the year, For you to come again.

And now you smile upon the sleeping flowers, And fill my happy eyes

With treasures buried in the dear warm earth, And garnered in the skies.

MARJORIE D. TURNER.

## THE ISLANDERS

#### By OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILE VERPILLEUX

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eglightarrow HE bell above the door in the outer wall jangled suddenly, with a creaking of rusty wires. At once the sleeping courtyard awoke. Médor leapt from the patch of sun-warmed turf upon which he had been drowsing and filled the air with his excited yappings. The door of the kitchen flew open beneath its ancient Gothic archway and Mélanie hurried out, fastening her apron-strings as she ran. Mademoiselle Du Chastel-Bièvre's white head appeared between the wistaria blossoms that draped her window. An eddy of white pigeons swirled skyward with a clatter of indignant wings. Even, had you been fanciful—which is to say foreign—you might have imagined a greater restlessness in the daws and crows circling the Cathedral spires far overhead.

"Do not open," cried Mademoiselle from above. "It may be foreigners. I am convinced, from the manner of ringing, that

they are strangers."

"Mais, Madame," screamed back Mélanie from the courtyard. "It is the hour at which you expect Madame la Générale. Voilà!"—as a deep vibrating hum echoed from the Cathedral bell-tower. "Even now it strikes the hour."

"Nevertheless," insisted her employer, though with less conviction, "nevertheless,

I have a feeling-"

She was already too late. Mélanie had opened the low, heavily-barred door that gave upon the Impasse Cloître Saint-Denis. Then at least Mademoiselle had the mournful satisfaction of knowing that she had been right. Scarcely was the door ajar when Mélanie burst into outraged protest, her whole stout figure vibrant with indignation. "Privatouse!" "she screamed, rather than said, in the shrill bass of the Santongeotte. "No too see. Ugo waiee!" Having thus, as a hundred times before, reached the limit of the English vocabulary she had learned so hardly from Jeanne-Louise, she relapsed into her native tongue, directed, it was clear, at someone as French as herself, who replied as volubly, so that the shrill

echoes of battle were flung back from the towering walls of the Cathedral transept, caught and deflected by the high-pitched roof of the Hôtel Ducatel and so tossed skywards for the delectation of the circling daws.

Satisfied at last, Mélanie closed the door, barred it behind her and recrossed the courtyard. "It was that sacripant Touxdoux," she screamed up at the wistaria. "He brought another party of Insulaires. M. le Commissaire must be told of this."

"Evidently," called back Mademoiselle Du Chastel-Bièvre. "Evidently the Commissaire must be informed." She spoke with a certain weariness and her hand trembled as she closed the ancient casement,

avoiding further discussion.

"I do not like it," communed Mélanie ruefully, addressing Médor, who had paused in the middle of a yap of victory to scratch himself. "Madame is not well. A month ago she would have been furious—outrageous. She would have écrasé those étrangers. And now-" She shook her head, rubbed her hands thoughtfully on her apron and, with a start, returned to her household duties. Médor stretched himself out on the little grass-plot in the centre of the courtyard; the pigeons eddied down again to their posts upon the roof and the ancient Hôtel dozed off again beneath the hot white sunlight of Santogne as peacefully as though there were not an intrusive foreigner within a hundred leagues of Biort.

You will already have realised that Mademoiselle Adèle Du Chastel-Bièvre did not like foreigners. "I mistrust them all," she was accustomed to declare. "They are so spiteful—so perfidious. But yes, my dear Agathe"—or "Madame la Comtesse"—or "Monsieur le Chanoine"—as the case might be—"I speak of what I know. I have had experience—sad experience—of them." Then she would sigh softly, shake her head and, by a natural sequence of ideas, change the subject to the crimes of a Radical-

Socialist Administration, the immodesty of post-war fashions or the general decadence of the times.

Now Mademoiselle Du Chastel-Bièvre was not a prejudiced person, as she would have told you herself, and, as the inner circle of that Catholic and Legitimist society of Biort to which she naturally belonged would have attested, she was a woman of strong, if saintly, personality. She openly asserted, for instance, and that in defiance of received opinion, that even Radical-Socialists might have their point of view, incredible though it might seem to some, and once, on the occasion of the signing of the Peace Treaty, she was even rumoured to have shaken hands with M. Gerancy, the Prefect of the Deux-So you may suppose that when she showed herself pitiless towards foreigners, and especially towards the Islanders, she had reason and to spare.

There was, first and foremost, the reason of environment. The very house she lived in was long-standing testimony to the perfidy and spitefulness of the étranger, as for that matter was the whole Sovereign Duchy of the Santogne-shamefully renamed by a Republican Government the Département of the Deux-Bièvres—and its capital city of Biort. Was there not, within ten kilometres of the Grand Place, the site of the ancient stronghold of Grandfort, destroyed by the Insulaires seven centuries ago and more? Was there not the Clos des Anglais, that peaceful meadow flanking the Route Nationale on the way to Deuxponts, still commemorating the victory there gained over them by the great Constable Olivier de Very well, then. Above all was there not the Hôtel Ducatel itself? ask you.

The Hôtel Ducatel is worthily dubbed, though by an unworthy Administration, a "monument historique" of the first rank, and as thus starred by every self-respecting guide-book. High-shouldered, grey, uncompromising, its blank walls and suspicious tourelles still gaze darkly at the Renaissance frivolity of the Cathedral across the narrow cul-de-sac which divides them, to end in those world-famous cloisters of Saint-Denis to which, as to the Hôtel, it gives the sole approach. Even older, by three centuries at least, than the great fane which is the glory of Central France, it may well claim to be the most historic monument in Biort, which is to say, in the eyes of the Santongeottes, of all France—which is again to say, in the eyes of all true Frenchmen, of the civilised world. Admittedly it is one of the three-or four if we include the Maison Druance at Bourg-en-Craonne, which Viollet-Le-Duc rejects—one of the four perfect and perfectly preserved examples of domestic town-architecture of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. In the days when the Islanders held the Duchy it was, as existing records testify, the town-dwelling of the That Roi Edouard who English Governors. won, by treachery, the fatal battle of Crecy, stayed in it more than once and dated from it edicts which you may still study in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The even more funeste Henri V-presumptuously self-styled King of France—did likewise. A little later a greater than he, Jehanne la Pucelle, slept in the very chamber more recently occupied by Mademoiselle Adèle Du Chastel-Bièvre, on her way to Orleans after having expelled the English Governor Sir Talbot. You may still see the room—or might, if you were granted admission—and the Book of Hours which she gave with her own hands to the then representatives of the Chastel-Bièvres, who later died gloriously by her side beneath the walls of Rouen.

All this is—unhappily—sufficient lure for the English tourist—the more so that the Islanders long since adopted Jehanne as though she were one of their own heroines instead of having drubbed them out of France. There is worse to follow. One Benjamin Franklaing—an American presumably of some note in his own countryvisited the house and afterwards wrote something about it, so that American tourists are as eager for admission as the Anglishes —and even more unscrupulous. Worst of all in Mademoiselle Adèle's eyes, the German poet Schiller also wrote about it—a whole poem indeed—and since the Peace German trippers have become almost as numerous and intrusive as the others.

As though the annoyance of having your privacy continually threatened, your doorbell jangled at all hours of the day and night, were not enough, there was the added infliction of the official guides. The City Fathers of Biort frown upon unofficial cicerones, who are accordingly more easily repelled. But their own—dignified by the wearing of an official badge, though making their own financial arrangements with their clients, add to their personal grievance that the Hôtel be closed against them and their clients, that of Republican officials against a Royalist householder. Thus they were supported in their insolence by the authori-

ties, who had yet another reason for regarding Mademoiselle Adèle with disfavour.

The feud may be described as secular, having its remote origins in the guillotining, under the Terror of the (officially) last Marquis of Chastel-Bièvre, Antoine, twenty-third of the name. His infant son alone survived of all the family and was rescued and carried to England, it is supposed, by a faithful servant. There all trace of him was lost and the family supposed extinct.

Half a century or so later appeared one Antoine Ducatel, a man, officially, of humble origin. He began life, as far as is known, as an iron-worker in a North of England foundry, came later to Biort, even then a centre of the French iron industry, there established his own foundries, prospered exceedingly, and when he died left his fortune and his foundries between his son Antoine and his daughter Adèle.

Now there was no doubt at all, in the mind of Mademoiselle Adèle-whatever her brother may have thought about it—that they were the direct heirs and representatives of the late Marquis Antoine Du Chastel-There was certainly an unfortunate gap in the pedigree, for their father had been curiously reticent about his parentage—and despite considerable expenditure of time and money Mademoiselle Adèle could never obtain legal proof that he was, in fact, the missing heir. At least all the probabilities pointed that way-why in the world, for instance, should he have come to Biort at all, otherwise?—and all men of goodwill were as content that Mademoiselle Adèle Ducatel should style herself Adèle Du Chastel-Bièvre as that her brother—who yet obstinately continued to call himself plain Ducatel—doubtless in obedience to his stronger-willed sister, should purchase the ancient town-house of the family-confiscated during the Revolution and ever since in alien hands-and should spend considerable sums in restoring and refurnishing it in accordance with tradition, even to the provision of numerous relics—more or less authenticated-of the Maid.

Unfortunately the Republican authorities frowardly refused to acknowledge Mademoiselle Adèle's right to the name she preferred to bear, referring to her on all official occasions as "Femme Ducatel (Adèle)." Even they descended to such pettiness as to inscribe the name of her nephew Antoine, who died on the field of honour, upon the official Biort War Memorial as plain Soldat Ducatel (Antoine), despite his aunt's furious

protests. And tiùs continued to rankle even after she had erected another monument, in the chancel of Saint-Denis de Biort, whereon he was more worthily described as Antoine, 26th Marquis of Chastel-Bièvre, Count of Pallissy and Rongeac, Seigneur of Merave, of Soigny and of Pontauchausson.

Mademoiselle Adèle was not, in those days at least, inclined to suffer insults gladly, and her consequent attacks on the authorities did not help her when it came to demanding punishment of the insolent guides who thronged her threshold out of sheer malice. As, had there been no étrangers there would have been no guides—or few—her resentment was naturally transferred by degrees from the guides to their employers and added to the account already debited to them for the destruction of Grandfort, the burning of the Maid, and other crimes, public and private.

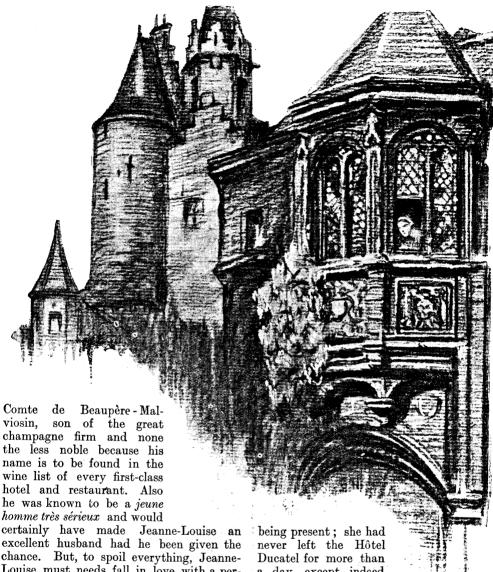
Then came the last straw—so to put it—the marriage of Jeanne-Louise.

When Antoine Ducatel died, his death hastened by the loss of his only child, Mademoiselle Adèle, left alone in her ancient stronghold, cast about her for some object upon whom she might lavish her affection. She found it ready at hand in the person of little Jeanne-Louise. Jeanne-Louise was the only surviving child of dear Cousin Marie-Louise, and dear Cousin Marie-Louise was not only Mademoiselle Adèle's schoolmate and dearest friend, but also, as Mademoiselle Adèle was accustomed to insist, her nearest and (if we except little Jeanne-Louise) her last surviving relative. In England—even accepting Mademoiselle Adèle's claims-it would scarcely have been regarded as a relationship at all-but Mademoiselle Adèle was convinced of it. Was not dear Cousin Marie-Louise born a Coëtalon and married to a Clissy, two ancient families closely allied by marriage with the Du Chastel-Bièvres ever since ancient families existed, and accordingly far within the limits of kinship? Indubitably. Accordingly, when little Jeanne-Louise lost her mother, a widow, what more natural than that dear Cousin Adèle should receive her into her house and heart, treat her in everything as a daughter and only refrain from formally adopting her because they were already so closely akin.

For fifteen years or so little Jeanne-Louise lived in the Hôtel Ducatel and was cared for and cossetted and reared as a jeune fille bien élevée should be reared, by Mademoiselle



"What do you want?' asked Jeanne-Louise, regarding him calmly and coldly, just as though she had never seen him before."



chance. But, to spoil everything, Jeanne-Louise must needs fall in love with a perfectly impossible person.

It was unfortunate—it was even wicked -as the dowagers of Biort agreed unanimously in council assembled—but a latitudinarian might find excuse for her. Life in Biort is not very exciting, especially for a jeune fille bien élevée, for in Biort, as in other French (perhaps also, English) Cathedral cities, certain conventions and traditions still hold sway which are almost forgotten in less self-respecting communities. Jeanne-Marie was nineteen she had never been out of doors unchaperoned; she had never danced with a person of the opposite sex; she had never exchanged ten words with a young man without a third party

a day, except indeed when she was at the Convent of the Sœurs

Visitandines. She had no other recreations than fine needlework, household duties and the reading of books carefully selected for her by a committee consisting of dear Cousin Adèle and Madame Tancq-Desepinettes, sister of His Eminence the Cardinal-Bishop of Biort. It is true that she had her devotions—but to them and to an unfortunate attack of tic douloureux upon the face of Mélanie the whole trouble was really due.

It is only a few yards from the door of the Hôtel along the impasse to the great portals of Saint-Denis, and once within it, the chapel of Notre Dame de la Belle Verrière is on the left of the Nef before you come to the glorious North Transept. The chapel, which was Jeanne-Louise's favourite spot in all the Cathedral, is also world-famous for its wonderful fourteenth-century window, from which it takes its popular name and hence is much visited by étrangers. One day Jeanne-Louise was kneeling there, awaiting Mélanie, who was to conduct her home, when a young man passed her prie-dieu and paused. He had no higher purpose, it is to be feared, than to admire the glories of the great window, but he happened to look at Jeanne-Louise—and after that he looked no more at the window. Even Jeanne-Louise could see-though, of course, she was not looking—that he was struck by her appearance, and the very next time she went to the Cathedral—there was the young man again-and again-until Jeanne-Louise almost began to fear that Mélanie would notice him. She should, and knew that she should, have felt seriously annoyed, but it was a little difficult to take offence at one so perfectly respectful. He was even shy—absurdly shy, a young person not so bien élevée might have thought—never venturing to speak to her or even to look at her directly, but only when he thought she was not looking at him. He was goodlooking, too, in a curiously foreign sort of way, and a golden blonde, whereas the Santongeots are mostly very dark, as was Jeanne-Louise herself, only with blue eyes and rosy complexions. Altogether an intriguing, an interesting, even an annoying young man, Jeanne-Louise would think as she studied him without looking at him. It is true she cannot have thought about him very much, for she never so much as mentioned him even to dear Cousin Adèle, from whom, as she often told her circle, the dear child had not a single withheld confidence.

It was about ten days after she had first seen the young man—and, truth to tell, Jeanne-Louise was beginning to feel rather impatient with him—when a very remarkable thing happened. Mélanie was suffering from a very terrible tie, as you have heard already, and had gone to consult M. le Docteur Vessinet about it. Marthe, her youthful aide, was doing the marketing in her place, and when the bell rang there was no one to answer it but Jeanne-Louise herself. It was an unusual ring—two, in fact—the first very timid, so that you could hardly hear it, the second, after a long pause, very loud. Jeanne-Louise, as a matter of fact, had been

expecting something to happen ever since she came back from the Cathedral overnight, for without looking at him she had noticed something in the young man's face that suggested it. So when the bell rang the second time she hurried to answer it, her heart in her mouth without knowing why, although dear Cousin Adèle called to her from the upper window as usual.

"Do not open, Jeanne-Louise," she cried.
"It may be foreigners. I am convinced from their manner of ringing the bell that they are *étrangers*." In which she was quite

right, as you shall hear.

Jeanne-Marie may not have heard, for she did not obey. Instead she undid the heavy bars, her heart still beating unaccountably fast, and opened the door. It was the

strange young man.

Evidently he had not expected to see Jeanne-Louise, for at the sight of her face his own went suddenly crimson and his whole long body seemed to wriggle. He snatched off his hat and his eyes goggled and his mouth opened, though no words came from it and altogether he looked very ridiculous.

"What do you want?" asked Jeanne-Louise, regarding him calmly and coldly, just as though she had never seen him before.

The young man said nothing, though his face grew, if possible, more crimson and his

eyes goggled more preposterously.

Jeanne-Louise looked at him with her eyebrows slightly raised and her head the least bit on one side as though patiently awaiting an answer. He had intended, we may suppose, to ask permission to see over the house, so that it may have been fortunate for him that he was struck dumb and could only crumple his hat between his hands until it had entirely lost its shape.

Jeanne-Louise, her eyebrows even higher than before, began to close the door, though not very fast, lest he might have something important to say.

"Why did you ring?" she asked patiently, as though speaking to a child,

her hand on the latch.

The young man spoke at last, so loudly that he might almost be said to roar. "I—I—I wanted to tell you that I love you," and his voice was so loud that Médor, who had been detained on some business of his own, was roused to a sense of duty and rushed yapping across the courtyard. Perhaps he frightened the young man, for without awaiting a reply, he turned and ran—positively ran—down the *impasse* until

he reached the parvis of the Cathedral and disappeared round the corner.

Jeanne-Louise closed the door and walked sedately towards the house. Only once she paused, to call up to dear Cousin Adèle at the window. "You had reason, my cousin. It was only an Islander."

"You sent him away?"

Jeanne-Louise shrugged her shoulders. "But—you see."

She decided after consideration that she would not allow the young man's presumption to keep her away from the Cathedral, even though she had to go alone, Mélanie being prevented by her tic, while it was dear Cousin Adèle's day for receiving the visits of her friends. The young man would never dare to present himself there. If he did—well, he must be taught how a jeune fille bien élevée checks such presumption.

It is doubtful if a more impossible young man could have been found in all the Santogne, considered as a suitor for the hand of dear Cousin Adèle's ward. Not only was he an étranger and not, apparently, ashamed of it, he was neither sérieux nor bien élevé, as his manner of introducing himself showed only too clearly. He was not noble, being indeed the son of some roturier or other, who owned iron-foundries somewhere in the Pays de Galles—as though a mere iron-founder could possibly be a match for the last representative of the families of Coëtalon and Clissy and Chastel-Bièvre. He had come to Biort to study his trade in the great foundries of the Société Metallurgique Biortaise—which everyone knows is little more than a succursale of some American concern —and there he actually worked with his hands, as though he were an artisan. had not the slightest idea of money, declaring when things reached that point that it was quite unnecessary to talk about a dot as he had plenty for both—an insult in itself which dear Cousin Adèle could scarcely be expected to forgive. Lastly, when he contrived in some perfidious manner to have himself presented to Mademoiselle Du Chastel-Bièvre—we can only hope that Jeanne-Louise did not suggest it to him by no less a person than Madame la Générale de Pouillot-Bellerive, wife of the officer commanding the Biort garrison and herself Dame Presidente of the Biort League of the White Banner—when, I say, he managed to force his way into the Hôtel Ducatel he committed within five minutes the worst crime in all dear Cousin Adèle's calendar without so much as a blush. He spoke of Joan the Maid with a cheerful, even patronising affection, "as though she were his younger sister," declared dear Cousin Adèle later, and commented casually, "She ought to have been an English girl; in fact, we almost look upon her as one nowadays, you know."

What Jeanne-Louise could see in such a perfectly impossible young man none of the older ladies of Biort could imagine. Unfortunately see something she did-"Ahthese modern girls!" as Madame Tancq-Desepinettes would cry with uplifted hands -showed herself a very monster of obstinacy and, to cut a long story short, married her impossible young man in defiance of Heaven and Earth, became, of all terrible fates, Madame Edouard Boucquarnane (as it is absurdly pronounced, though spelt even more absurdly B-U-C-H-A-N-A-N, and departed with her husband to his cold and foggy island, without anyone being able to do anything at all to stop her.

That, of course—one must be fair—was very largely the fault of the wicked Radicals who, by denying dear Cousin Adèle's relationship to Jeanne-Louise, made it impossible for her to forbid the marriage, as she could otherwise have done as head of the Chastel-Bièvre family, so that Jeanne need not so much as ask for her consent or that of any other living being.

To the general disappointment of her friends Mademoiselle Adèle seldom referred to the matter after Jeanne-Louise's departure. Once only, in the presence of Madame Tancq-Desepinette and a few other of her intimates, she unbosomed herself. Never, she declared, did she wish to hear the name of Madame Boucquarnane mentioned in her presence; never again would she speak to any étranger whatever and never would she receive any person into the Hôtel Ducatel who could speak one word of any language but French. Beyond that she had no more to say and hoped that her dear friends would not again mention the subject.

It was some six months after the tragedy that Mélanie received her first warning that all was not well with her mistress. It seemed a small matter at first—simply that Mademoiselle Adèle seemed to lose interest in her war against the official guides. From a certain lack of acerbity in her correspondence with the authorities it grew until the time came when she would scarcely lift her head at the sound of the bell and it was left to Mélanie to uphold the inviolacy of the Hôtel Ducatel. By that time she had no

doubt that Mademoiselle was failing. Three months later Mademoiselle took to her bed and there lay so quietly and displayed so little interest in the things of this life that her departure from it seemed only a matter of days.

"But—you consider then—that if it were possible to arouse her interest—to make her more contented with life——" suggested Mélanie, thoughtfully.

"Exactly," agreed the doctor. "To arouse her interest in life. It is en effet, more



"" But—but—— eried Mademoiselle, really roused at last from her torpor. "What in the world is this?"

"There is no organic disease," said M. le Docteur Vessinet, not once but many times, to the anxious Mélanie. "It is—how shall I put it to you? It is that she has no longer the desire to live. And that, Mademoiselle Mélanie, in a woman no longer young, is the most incurable of all diseases."

a matter for a priest than for a physician."
"Tiens—to arouse her interest," said
Mélanie again. "I am neither a priest nor
a physician, look you—but—it appears to
me——" And for the rest of that day
Mélanie performed her household duties
with something of the air of a general
plotting a campaign.

It was perhaps a week later. Mélanie was sitting by the bedside of her old friend, who lay passive, scarcely answering or seeming to hear her efforts to amuse, to enlighten, even to annoy, to do anything that might rout that growing lethargy. Suddenly the garden bell jangled sharply.

Mélanie sprang excitedly from her chair. "It is that scoundrel Touxdoux at his old tricks again," she cried. "I shall have something to say to him, I promise you. And Madame will, of course, write at once to

M. le Commissaire of Police."

Actually she wronged—and knew that she wronged—the worthy M. Touxdoux, for, since it had become known that Mademoiselle Duchatel was ill, there had been a marked falling off in the unwelcome attentions of the official guides. One is, after all, a Santongeotte! Qué Diable!!

Mademoiselle raised her hand, slowly and wearily. "Admit them, Mélanie," she murmured. "That Touxdoux has his living to

make, as well as another."

"Mais, Madame!" Mélanie looked at

her in frank despair.

"After all—it is only natural that people should wish to visit a house so famous. Admit them, Mélanie, if they are not étrangers—for that I have sworn and——" She murmured something incoherent about keeping her oath and relapsed into silence again.

Mélanie went slowly from the room shaking her head. A minute later Médor's shrill outcry seemed to show that battle had been joined, but even then Mademoiselle did not

stir.

Three minutes later still Mélanie re-entered the room, an excitement that was not feigned on her every feature. "Madame," she cried, "Madame—there is a monsieur who demands to see you."

"To see me?" asked Mademoiselle Adèle, with little show of interest. "It is some malentendu. Who should want to see me?"

"Mais, Madame—he insists. He will take no denial. He declares—figure to yourself—he declares himself a Chastel-Bièvre—one of the old family—one of those for whom Madame has so long been searching."

"Is he from England?" asked her mistress in the same blank voice which Mélanie

had come to dread.

"But no, indeed! He is no foreigner," she answered none the less defiantly. "He cannot speak one word of Anglishe—or of any other foreign language."

How Mélanie had become aware of this she did not trouble to explain. At least

she was rewarded for her subterfuge, if such it were. Mademoiselle Adèle showed a real if faint interest, even made an effort to sit erect. "A Chastel-Bièvre—who is a Frenchman," she said. "Then it is his right to be received by the head of the family. Give me my peignoir, Mélanie, and brush my hair."

Mélanie obeyed, her fingers trembling so that she could scarcely hold the brush, and, her task completed, hurried from the room. There was a short interval of silence and a ceremonial tapping sounded outside the door.

"Entrez donc!" cried Mademoiselle Adèle.

The door opened slowly and the voice of Mélanie was heard. "Monsieur Antoine," she announced importantly. "Monsieur Antoine Bou—Bouq—Monsieur Antoine in fact, to wait upon Madame."

The door opened further and Mélanie came in, carrying in her arms an extremely

pink baby.

"But—but——" cried Mademoiselle, really roused at last from her torpor.

"What in the world is this?"

"This, Madame," repeated Mélanie proudly. "This, I say, is Monsieur Antoine, the youngest of Madame's family. He is, indeed, not yet a year old. And see, it is as I assured, Madame. Not one word of English can he speak or understand."

And Monsieur Antoine, as though to confirm her words, blew a bubble and voiced a "Gloo—gloo—gloo" that certainly was not

English as generally understood.

\* \* \* \* \*

If you are one of those people skilled in drawing the exact balance between benefits and injuries, you will be able to decide for yourself whether or no Mademoiselle Adèle Du Chastel-Bièvre showed weakness in forgetting her old dislike of the étranger and especially of the Islanders after the coming of little Antoine. For though, on the one hand, apart from more ancient injuries, to them she owed the loss—temporary though it proved—of Jeanne-Louise, it was to them —more exactly perhaps to Jeanne-Louise's study of their island history—that she was able to receive that young nobleman—not to speak of his father and mother, who might be regarded as his entourage—without feeling that she had in the slightest degree derogated from her fixed resolve never to receive under her roof one who spoke that perfidious tongue. You will remember, of course, that the passage taken advantage of by Jeanne-Louise details how a certain Roi Edouard, having promised his Welsh subjects a Prince who should speak no language but their own—of course you know it and it is needless for me to recall it to you.

At least receive him she did, and now, if you should happen to visit the ancient and famous city of Biort at any time when the English schools are closed for the holidays and should be privileged to obtain an introduction to Mademoiselle Adèle Du Chastel-Bièvre, chatelaine of the ancient Hôtel Ducatel in that city, it is quite on the cards that she will introduce you—his being the higher rank—to a small, fair-haired (possibly rather grubby) boy with very yellow hair and dark blue eyes with unexpectedly dark lashes. If so, she will certainly explain to you that he is her little cousin Antoine,

representative of the three great houses of Coëtalon, Clissy and Chastel-Bièvre and in the days to come, when France returns to her ancient allegiance—27th marquis of the last-named Seigneury, which by special decretal of the Holy Roman Empire descends, exceptionally, through the female line. If she forgets to add that he is on the paternal side a Boucquarnane (so pronounced, though absurdly spelt B-U-C-H-A-N-A-N), it will be not in the least because she has any prejudice against the name but simply because the other information seems to her very much the more important and interesting. Also she will not think of informing you that the small Marquis with the unpronounceable patronymic is the light of her eyes—but that you will be able to see for yourself.

En effet, Messieurs et 'Dames—dear Cousin Adèle has recovered her interest in life.

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#### A BIRD SANCTUARY.

MY garden does not hold a cat, My terrier, Binks, has seen to that, And so the birds, from morn till night Make it a garden of delight.

The blackbirds flute at early dawn Before the light is really born; And all day long the thrushes sing, Their voices gladden everything!

A chaffinch whistles tirelessly
His little, flustered melody;
The robin pipes his tender lay,
And tits and finches chirp all day.

For all the birds are safe, you see
In every creeper, bush and tree;
Because my garden holds no cat;
—My terrier, Binks, has seen to that!
L. G. MOBERLY.



"'I found some money in the pocket of your navy coat, Miss Joan,' said the maid. 'There were four £1 notes.' . . . 'Money, Parker?' I'm sure I never—let me see it.'"

## SHILLINGSWORTH OF COPPER

By GORDON COATES

ILLUSTRATED BY WILMOT LUNT

HE mirror-lined walls of the tailor's fitting-room reflected a well-set-up, grey-eyed, fair young man in a discreetly dark and perfectly tailored lounge suit. If the time-honoured epithet "faultless" cannot be applied to his appearance, it is because no man considers himself faultlessly dressed in a brand-new suit, new shirt, new collar, new tie, new shoes, new socks, and—no, forget the underwear; the catalogue of newness ends with the hat. After eighteen months without a job one cannot buy everything all at once.

In eighteen months there are about 540 days. The estimate is rough and rela-

tive; if the man who works it out is out of work, his answer will be nearer five thousand. And on each day, in every newspaper, the "Wants" columns provide a sensational serial. By the expenditure of ink, paper, ingenuity and postage, anyone who feels fitted for the part may become a protagonist. The action, when it occurs, is thrilling; it may lead to interviews, managerial apartments, even to a full board-room of directors. One never knows. But each chapter ends with the words: "Thank you, Mr. Blank. We will let you know."

Philip Cranston had received a salary

of five hundred a year—until his firm and his job went smash. For eighteen months he had eked out his savings and thanked God that he was not married. The rest of that story shall be skipped; its humiliation and degradation were graven too deep on his face to need retelling. And already it was being erased. Brand-new clothes have a tonic effect. So has the knowledge that one has landed a job at last. For he had landed a job—or, rather, a friend with influence had landed one for him.

Hanging on a hook in the cubicle was another suit, fashioned by the same tailor two years before. It had been carefully tended, but its bloom was gone. The morning-coated cutter delicately hinted that it

might with advantage be pressed.

"Very well," said Cranston, taking up his wash-leather gloves—resurrected and washed—"I'll leave it, and break in this new outfit at once. By the way, I hope you haven't descended to this vulgar, ultra-modern method of demanding payment on the spot?"

The attendant smiled deprecatingly, and gracefully waived the point. "To our regular patrons, sir, we always allow the

usual credit."

"Good!" said Cranston, lightly. But he knew at once that he had committed a solecism of which in his more prosperous days he would never have been guilty. In that exclusive establishment the bill was an unmentionable subject; one paid —emphatically one paid; but the beautiful theory was that patrons were above suspicion, and Time existed not.

"We have your new address, sir," went on the morning-coated dandy. "Your other suit shall be sent there as soon as

possible."

Perfection of mien and tone! Despise it not, you who have never known the insolence and casual contempt of wage-earning underlings for the man who no longer "belongs." The "sir" and bows with which he was wafted through the door were sweet music and soothing balm to Philip Cranston.

He strode down the street with swinging gait. The subtle, melancholy air of defeat which had clung about him for so many heart-breaking months was gone. The new suit had done the trick. He was stamped once more as one who, holding a niche in the world, was entitled to his own self-respect.

Six months' probation on £5 a week, and then a salary of £400 a year, with incre-

ments rising in four years to £800. And excellent prospects after that. All due to luck—sheer luck!—and the loyalty of a single remaining friend. But he knew that he could hold the job down. He had had a week of it—a week in the old suit that had been tended carefully for just such a purpose.

It was now one o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and in Cranston's pocket, besides some small change, were five £1 notes, the first draught from the new fount of wealth. The last dregs of his savings had gone in haberdashery and shoes. Yes, it had been

as close a thing as that.

He turned into Piccadilly, and slackened his pace to the leisurely stroll of a manabout-town. He felt and looked the part. It amused him to indulge the fancy; the glances of passers-by encouraged him; and the knowledge that he had five pounds in his pocket, and would have a week hence another five pounds, gave him the calm assurance of one who possesses limitless wealth. He could even afford luncheon in a fashionable restaurant.

But the prudence that had borne him safely through eighteen parsimonious months asserted itself, and he entered a tea-shop. It was the busy hour, and the place was crowded with the usual Saturday morning West End shoppers. All the tables were occupied. He seated himself opposite a man who, he saw, was preparing to leave. In another moment he had the table to himself.

A newspaper lay on the table. Cranston took it up, and observed lying beneath, evidently left as a tip, a large pile of coppers. He counted them with his eye. There were twelve pennies—a shillingsworth of copper! No ordinary tip for a tea-shop!

He was reading the newspaper when a movement drew his attention. A girl had slipped into the vacant seat opposite. Cranston glanced at her, and immediately returned to his paper. He was never one to stare at a woman. He was, indeed, woman-shy; but he might have been forgiven for staring now, for the girl had a singularly fragile wistful beauty. She was dressed plainly and quietly in a navy costume and a close-fitting felt hat. She might have been a girl from one of the department stores, or an actress who was "resting," or—genteel word!—a lady. Undoubtedly she was a lady, for a navy costume is the most useful garb for poor genteel womanhood the world over.

Again a movement attracted Cranston's notice. But this time he did not look at the girl's face. It was her hand that, from cover of his newspaper, he was watching.

The girl had withdrawn her glove, and her left hand rested on the table, ringless, thin, white. It closed stealthily over the pile of pennies lying there, and slipped

them swiftly into a handbag.

Before he could control himself, his startled eyes had met the equally startled eyes of the girl, and he stared—stared so that confusion mantled to crimson in her face. Her lips trembled with mortification. She looked thin and delicate. It did not require the trained eye of a doctor to perceive the traces of recent illness. Or was it starvation?

In a desperate effort to collect herself she stammered, "I—you don't—you mustn't—"

"Forgive me," he put in, gently. "I ought not to have seen it. And I don't blame you. I expect I should do the same myself if I were driven to it."

He saw a waitress approaching, and went on swiftly: "Listen, you must have lunch with me. I quite understand. You were desperate and intended to have something to eat whatever happened, and the sight of that pile of copper was too much for you. Please do me the honour of lunching with me. I'm disgustingly rich and——"

The waitress was upon them. Cranston calmly proceeded to order what he considered were the choicest and most nourishing items on the menu. The girl watched him with eyes suddenly very bright and grateful. It is not every day that one meets a Galahad in a tea-shop.

"And now," said Cranston, when the waitress had gone, "permit me to introduce myself—Philip Cranston, at your service. I will promise to behave as a gentleman, although I am sadly out of

practice."

The girl looked at him in surprise. "Out

of practice?" she asked.

A bad break, that! For eighteen months he had shrunk from confiding his hideous secret, and now it was on the point of betrayal.

He thought rapidly.

If he told her the truth about himself, she would want to repay him later, and he did not wish to be repaid. The girl's voice was modulated and cultured. Whatever the world had done to her, she was still a gentlewoman with a gentlewoman's code, and he knew the bitter exactions that code

entailed. Later she would have made confession and restitution to the waitress. She should not make restitution to him.

"It is difficult for an idler to be a gentleman," he explained. That was the line to take. He was dressed and cast for a part, and it was up to him to play it.

"That sounds rather cynical," she smiled.

"But I suppose you don't mean it."

He waved a hand airily.— "My dear young lady—by the way, you haven't told me your name yet."

The girl's eyes were twinkling very brightly now. She laughed ingenuously. "You may call me—Miss Joan," she replied, demurely.

"Thank heaven for a singular name. The

plural would be inappropriate."

"And now tell me about yourself," she suggested. "I think you said that you

were disgustingly rich."

"Oh, I am. You'd be surprised," said he—and encouraged the feeling that he spoke the truth. Also he admired her adroitness in choosing a topic far removed from herself. Evidently she, too, was anxious to avoid the confiding of shameful details.

"Then you must be a very fortunate young man," observed Miss Joan. "How do you spend your money and your time?"

"Well, chiefly on myself."

"I can't believe that," she protested.
"I'm sure it isn't true. Tell me what you have done during the past year."

He writhed inwardly. Queer how everyone asked him that! And queerer still how morbidly sensitive he was about it. What

had he done during the past year?

"Well," he began, "I got up each morning and read the newspaper. And then I went to—to my club and read all the other newspapers. It's really frightfully interesting having nothing to do. There's the problem of where to lunch, and how to lunch. And clothes—the amount of care and thought we leisured men are compelled to devote to clothes is appalling. And keeping an eye on our investments—that's another worry. And paying calls, you know—a dreadful bore! Altogether it has been a very busy, harassing year." She shook her head. "I know that I'm

She shook her head. "I know that I'm being very inquisitive and impertinent," she said, "and you are quite right to retaliate by being trivial and flippant. But I'm really very interested in rich young men. They're so very rare nowadays, don't you think?—the nice sort, I mean."

He laughed uneasily. "I suppose they

are, when one comes to think of it."
"Very well, won't you tell me, please, how a young man of means and leisure really spends his time?"

not, she must not, know the price he had to pay. So be it! Wealth should swell the theme.

So he took his fences cleanly and hunted with the best. And having stabled the



He made an effort. If he failed now his secret would surely be discovered, and she would insist on repaying him. Besides, he was formulating a plan that involved more than the cost of a luncheon. She would

horses, he collected golf sticks and shooting boxes and country-house parties and friends with yachts. He went touring in Europe and gambling at "Monte." Forgive him if you can. Life for him had taken a rosy

hue, and a man must live according to his lights.

On one point only was he weak. He knew that the men who did these things were, for the most part, on holiday. For the rest of their time they worked, and worked hard; they were business men, politicians, or in some profession. But

"It all sounds so aimless and futile," she said once. "Have you no desire to do something more useful? There are so many things in the world still waiting to be done."

"And so many useful people anxious to do them. A dreadful crowd. Someone has to stand aside and make way for them.



"Again a movement attracted Cranston's notice. But this time he did not look at the girl's face. It was her hand that, from cover of his newspaper, he was watching."

somehow he could think of no serious occupation for a young man of means and leisure.

As the meal proceeded, and the host prattled on, an expression of sadness gradually clouded the girl's face, and she seemed to become more silent and withdrawn.

So, you see, I have been useful, after

"I don't mean earning money," persisted the girl. "If you have lots of money, it is right that you should let someone else have a chance. But there is such a thing

as working for others. Don't you see what I mean?"

"Don't you believe it," he replied, with sudden bitterness of recollection. "Have you ever tried to persuade people to let you work for them? But of course you have—and look what they've done to you."

She flinched as from a blow, and lowered her eyes. "Now you're mixing two entirely different things," she said, gently.

He kicked himself for a clumsy, blundering fool. "I—I beg your pardon. I didn't mean that. Look here, don't let us argue any more. Myself as a topic is not very pleasant. We'll choose something else."

They found that there were, upon other subjects, many views they shared in common. But the luncheon drew to a close, the waitress got two shillings for herself, and the two walked to the door without having disclosed the truth that would be even more unpalatable than the fiction.

To settle the bill, Cranston broke into one of his precious notes. The plan that had been formulating in his mind throughout the meal he now proceeded dexterously to execute. The girl was wearing a plain and serviceable-looking costume, and—yes, there it was—miracle of miracles, it had a pocket! In slipped his four remaining notes, and he felt as guilty as a pickpocket.

In the street, Miss Joan turned to him with her smiling, level gaze, and shyly tendered a hand.

"Thank you for a very pleasing experience," she said, frankly. "I must run away now. You have been very, very kind, Mr. Cranston."

They shook hands cordially, and he murmured something about a man waiting for him at his club. He watched her hurrying westward until she was lost among the crowd. Then he, too, went his way, and tried to recapture the exaltation of an earlier mood. But he had had his little hour, and with that he must be content. He tried to work out a few details concerning finance, credit, and the landlady.

Let us pause for a moment and attempt that same calculation. From £5 and some small change, subtract £4 and the cost of luncheon for two in a tea-shop. What is the difference? An accountant's answer would be unsatisfactory. He could not compute the difference. £4 paid into the bank—there is a ledger for this. But £4 given unseen to a high-minded girl whom the world had driven to the pettiest of

thefts—is there a ledger ruled for this? Maybe there is. And maybe Cranston was content to subsist for a week on the answer and the silver and the difference.

The day wore on, and evening fell. The lights of the city woke to blazon in the sky the praise of theatres and whisky and popular idols; the streets were fevered with the quest for beauty and romance; and all unperceived, on every hand, romance and beauty were attained.

But he who might have mingled in the throng had foregone his holiday from hunger for at least another week, and had returned to his Spartan lodging. That night he lay awake in his tiny bedroom. Somehow

sleep would not come.

"Poor, poor little girl," he thought aloud. "I wonder what drove her to it? She was rather wonderful, too. Perhaps if I hadn't been forced to play the Caliph of Baghdad we might—oh, well! Sweet dreams, Scheherazade. May your story be a happy one!"

Thus spoke the man who had lived and

lied like a true gentleman.

And at that same hour, in one of the sedate mansions of a renowned and haughty square—in a bedroom softly carpeted and warm with the glow of shaded lights whose reflections twinkled here and there on points of silver and crystal—a young lady was being attended by her maid.

"I found some money in the pocket of your navy coat, Miss Joan," said the maid.

"There were four £1 notes."

"Money, Parker? I'm sure I never—let me see it."

Four £1 notes they were. Nothing less—and nothing more. No card or clue to tell whence they came. But the girl's face was very thoughtful when she turned

again to her maid and said:

"Parker, I did a very mean thing to-day. Perhaps waiters are right in saying that women are stingy with tips. I—I went into a tea-shop, and then discovered that I had no smaller change than a shilling. A shilling is far too much to tip a waitress for a cup of coffee, don't you think? Quite! So I tried to change my shilling for a shillingsworth of copper."

"I don't consider that mean at all, Miss

Joan," affirmed Parker, staunchly.

"Oh, but you haven't heard the half of it yet, Parker. And I don't think you ever will. No, I will bury my shame in my own bosom—and give £4 to a more deserving charity. Help me into this dress, please."

"But aren't you going to bed, Miss Joan?" asked Parker, solicitously.

know that the doctor-"

"Be silent, Parker!" commanded Miss Joan, with mock drama in her voice. "Have you ever been suspected of a crime, Parker?"

"Why-no, Miss Joan. Certainly not!" "Then some day you will be. Mark my words, Parker. Everyone is suspected of a crime of some kind, sooner or later."

Her head emerged from the folds of the

dress.

"And when that day arrives, Parker, let us hope that you are suspected unjustly. It is a terrible thing to be suspected unjustly, but it is far, far more terrible to be suspected when you are guilty."

"I trust that I shall always have a clear conscience, Miss Joan," said Parker, vir-

tuously.

"Nobody ever has a clear conscience at the critical moment, Parker. There is no smoke without fire. There was a critical moment for me this morning, when I ought to have looked—looked the world in the face and proudly explained why I needed a shillingsworth of copper. But I couldn't. And why, Parker? Because I was going to tip a waitress threepence instead of a shilling. I was going to jew a poor hardworking girl out of her lucky ninepence. Disgraceful, Parker!"

Parker giggled unsympathetically. young lady moved towards the door.

"And now I am going down to have one of my brother's cigarettes. I don't care what the doctor says. It is quite useless going to bed unless one can sleep, and I can't sleep. I will not sleep. You don't know the half of it, Parker. Go to bed yourself!"

Miss Joan Lennox descended to the library and there found, as she expected, a young man seated at a table, with a miniature avalanche of documents threatening to over-

whelm him.

"Well, how is the invalid?" he asked, pushing the papers aside, and rising. "Had your proteid - and - vitamin cocktail?

hear that you ventured out to-day."

"I went to the Welfare Centre for an hour this morning," replied the girl, "just to see how they were getting along. Give me a cigarette, please—and light one for yourself, too. Peter, can you spare half an hour for a talk with your little sister?"

"I know," said the young man. "I can read it in your face. You're going to

tell me the bed-time story of your wicked life."

For answer, the girl led him to a deep chair in the glow of the firelight, and planted him there, and seated herself on the chairarm, with one hand on her brother's shoulder.

"The day will come, Peter," she began, "when I shall marry. That is inevitable. You and I have so much money, and father will some day leave us so much more, that it would be almost a crime not to marry. If I were a poor girl, I might marry for money. I don't know. I think I can understand now why some girls marry for money. But because I am rich, I will never marry for anything but love—real love. you like me to tell you about the man I could love?"

The young man laughed gently, and held her close. "Go ahead, Joan. I don't think it is wise to form a mental picture of him before he arrives, but never mind that. Tell me all about him, and if I don't like it I'll bash his face in."

She slid down until her head rested on his shoulder.

"I could love a man with kind grey eyes and fair hair; who looks lonely and sad; who has a wonderful smile that he uses only to conceal his sadness, and to brighten the faces of others. He is kind and courteous to poor, plainly-dressed girls, and he does not try to flirt. He is generous with the generosity of understanding, not of charitythe charity that signs cheques. Sometimes he is mistaken, but his mistakes arise from a comprehending heart, not a careless mind. And sometimes he is imposed upon by wicked girls who cannot believe that chivalry still flourishes in modern Babylon.

"That is the man I could love. I would not care how poor he was, or what his prospects were. So long as he had the heart to fight, I would marry him and help him

—help him—help him."

Peter Lennox moved uneasily in his chair. "It sounds all right," he admitted, "but don't you think you are flying too high? He—he seems too much of an abstraction —a paragon. There's always a catch in it somewhere, you know—particularly in human nature."

"Yes," said the girl. "There is a catch. And I will tell you about that catch. I will tell you about someone who is neither

a paragon nor an abstraction.

"He has more money than is good for him because he does not know how wealth should be employed. He is a social butterfly fluttering from musty club-rooms to trivial drawing-rooms. He is an idler expending his futile energy on golf-links and grouse moors; an adornment of yachts and house-parties; a credit to his tailor and his valet, and to the lawyers and bankers who doubtless manage his affairs. And he has no ambitions, no sense of social duty; his only object in life is the gratification of the merest whims.

"There are not many such men left in England now, but it seems to be my fate always to meet that type. And, Peter, I could not love such a man, even if his eyes were grey, and he were ever so kind and courteous and generous to poor, plainlydressed girls whom he found in distress."

Thus spoke the Princess who had played. at being a beggar-maid, and had failed to find her Prince.

"I quite agree with you," said Peter Lennox. "But somewhere between your

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paragon and your waster there is quite a good range of choice. For example, a few weeks ago I met a friend whom I hadn't seen for nearly eighteen months. He had struck a bad patch—in fact, he was almost down and out, but too dashed proud and sensitive to admit it. Luckily I was able to put him in touch with a decent job. It's no good having influence if one doesn't use it, what? He would draw his first pay this morning. It's only a fiver a week at present, but he'll soon be getting more. I didn't intend to mention it yet, but I would rather like you to meet him some day. A fellow called Cranston—Philip Cranston. We were at school together and he's-why, Joan—Joan—what's the matter?"

"Nothing, Peter," she said, at last. "Nothing matters—not even a mere shillingsworth of copper. For now I know that we should have met and loved in any case . . . But isn't life queer and wonderful, when the truth is told?"

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#### BLACKTHORN WINTER.

VER field, over furrow, and down the long lane, May-happen we may stroll no-whither again !-Whilst daisies unclose.

And like drifted snows,

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The hedges be covered with bloom o' the sloes, Over field, over furrow, and down the long lane.

Oh, prick me no more with those days' lost delight, Sharp-piercing thorn with your flowers fleece-white! Still the wind blows cold,

Over dyke and wold,

And never a primrose peers over the mould ;-Stab me no more with those days' dear delight!

Over meadow and dip-well and down the green lane, When the blackthorn-snow's melted away in warm rain,

The king-cups will hold

A grace-cup of gold

To lips that are learning to laugh as of old;-While the cowslips swing-dance by the lambing fold, Over meadow and dip-well and down the green lane! ALICE E. GILLINGTON.



"Henry stared thoughtfully at himself in the long mirror."

### A PRIVATE VIEW

#### By FREDERICK WATSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

ENRY FANSHAW had decided in his own mind that Wilbraham must go, and Henry's decisions were usually-like those of all the finest tyrants from Nero onwards—pretty good nap selections of what was coming in. Moore was a child to Henry when he came to handle the future. But even Henry realised that with Wilbraham things were different. In these days, especially at a moderate wage, the most competent butlers are not shown the door, and Wilbraham—speaking professionally—was a treasure. Even if he had been guilty of sustained burglary, exhaustive intemperance, or the most awful incompetence, there were eager hands who would have snatched him up. But Wilbraham was beyond reproof. What was more, the household-though long subservient to Henry's will-knew it and had

already said so in reverent and hushed songs of thankfulness. He had carried peace and goodwill where there had long been only bitterness and combat. He was at once firm, just, and reasonable. Henry possessed none of these virtues, they had from the first caused him a sense of increasing antagonism. While Wilbraham tamed the cook, was adored by Elizabeth the housemaid, and simply fawned upon by the upper denizens of Wyncote, Henry lying on his bed upstairs revolved in his mind the actual reason which would propel Wilbraham into the world again. things as household tranquillity meant less than the dust to him simply because he never ventured into the wild.

It was a quiet August afternoon, and very finely adapted for sustained reflection. Sitting on his cushioned lounge chair in a

silk dressing-gown, Henry stared thoughtfully at himself in the long mirror. He was so accustomed to himself he did not blush or feel utterly wretched. He regarded his prolonged face, his pale disgruntled eyes, and his drooping discouraged moustache with sympathy and even a secret affection. He had never been a robust or pulsating young man, but there had been a time before that attack of influenza when he had gone about the world like other contemporaries, catching the 'bus at nine and returning at six. During those hours he had done something in the City, that magic wilderness into which men vanish and are seen no more. Whatever it was Henry did, the absence due to a chill, a bad winter and Dr. Pusey, seemed to bring about no crisis. The market remained steady. Kaffirs rose or possibly fell, Imps were a tip, child-like clergymen in innocent hamlets lost without Christian resignation in Mines which are salted for that very end, and in short Henry discovered the truth of that sweet old proverb that home's best. In fairness to Henry it should be admitted that Mr. Sarson, his confidential clerk—in fact his clerk-came once a week to sit in the strictest confidence with him. What they talked about no one knew. Henry sometimes referred with a sigh to the burdens of large commercial undertakings, but then Henry had brought the art of sighing almost to a language. It was Wilbraham who threatened to make trouble. He was a menace. The way he had dug himself into Wyncote—one of those substantial houses in Hampstead-was little short of insidious. It was in fact so sinister, so subtle, that no one appreciated what had happened except Henry, who upon that delightful afternoon, when all the world was trying to be kind and happy, pulled at his discouraged moustache and ruminated how Wilbraham could be shifted. problem was a delicate one. He had no fault to find with Wilbraham. even admit that the claims of the pro-Wilbraham party were considerable. Wilbraham made life almost endurable for Mary Fanshaw, who long ago had mistaken Henry for a modern troubadour; he took an interest in poor Algie, Mary's older brother, who had come a cropper on the turf and inhabited an upper room in great obscurity; he was the sworn ally of Wycherley, Henry's young son, who sat in a dingy office counting other people's figures when he itched to write popular novels; and he

delighted Elvira—Wycherley's wife—who being as lovely as a film star and quite common was bored stiff with the whole bunch of tricks. He had also a kindly word for poor Miss Macadoo, Mrs. Fanshaw's companion, and assisted Miss Agatha, the oldest Fanshaw, who took a very active interest in committees, to draw up agendas so long and ingenious that they had brought new life into meetings which were overshadowed by the prospect of dissolution. But he even had the impudence to arouse the keen support of Dick, the eldest boy, who had snapped his fingers at Henryat, in fact, his father—and occupied himself with hens.

On the other hand, there were the rudiments of an anti-Wilbraham party. Henry was quite certain from a word dropped here and there, that Pusey, under whose medical care he had reclined and declined for many years, did not take to him. Something too. lightly indicated by a gesture, so to speak, by Canon Weekes, had not passed unnoticed by Henry. The Canon, who had quite a name for brisk little books on suffering, was a frequent visitor at Wyncote, and enjoyed the delightful little dinners Henry gave upstairs. He had applauded Wilbraham a great deal before he mentioned how delightful-how original-it was to come across a butler who argued upon politics, and had in fact "views," which he was not afraid of expressing, however forcefully. So that was it. The Canon was anxious to be considered broadminded and hopeful of Labour. braham had evidently handled him firmly.

Henry, faced once more by the knowledge that Wilbraham must go and baffled for a reason, was driven to admit to himself that the fellow was taking a jolly keen interest in his case. There was nothing peculiar in that. All Wyncote had lived in close touch with Henry's symptoms for years. He had never mistaken compassion for idle curiosity. But the attitude of Wilbraham was different. It was perfectly courteous and sympathetic, but it was optimistic, even persuasive.

Just as though he thought Henry was not ill at all.

II.

MARY had married Henry under very romantic circumstances. She was at that time extremely young and sweet-natured, had always lived in the country, and in fact was overwhelmed by Henry, who, just down

from Oxford, seemed exceedingly wonderful. It was quite unlike Henry to be walking with a knapsack, because it entailed physical labour and uncertain refreshment, but it was a most fortunate perambulation for him. When he limped into Deeping and reached the Vicarage where his College friend Pinyon —an appalling youth—was nurtured, he did not realise he was settling down for life. Nor did poor Mary, who, meeting him that very evening, was taken by storm. Henry had in those days a frail and throaty tenor -a wistful reedy voice which he handled with adulation. In the candlelight of that ancient place, with young Pinyon—that dreadful young man—at the piano, Henry made his conquest. It was a walk-over. Mary was and remained without any sense of personal values. She saw something in Henry which was obscure to everyone else. By a fatal error real friends attempted to lower Henry's stock. But the more people exploded Henry the more she clung to him. She had clung to Henry ever since, and the burden had told on her. At the very start the sale of the old place (which had been hers) was a blow. But Henry had decided upon it. He had also invested the money injudiciously, which did not help matters.

Apart, of course, from "poor Uncle Algie," the only Challenger relatives left to Mary were her cousin Claude, whom she had never seen, and her sister Clarinda out in America. Claude managed the family affairs out there.

Sitting there at her little desk Mary was writing to Dick, her eldest boy, who in direct contradiction of Henry's wishes had started poultry farming in Sussex. She found the letter very difficult to write. Dick was just like her Uncle George. He took after the Challengers, and hunted a hireling not for the pomp and circumstance but because—if you have it in the blood you'll hunt an army mule or purloin a performing piebald from a travelling circus. But apart from love of a horse or dog, Dick had an eye for a good-looking girl, and it is a melancholy fact that many of the best lookers are also without a bean. Not that Dick cared. It is indecent to care about such things until one is over the possibilities of romance, whenever that terrible time rolls up. So Dick was engaged. It was simply the last straw. But even then Mary smiled. She was as full of glamour as a flower is full of scent. Henry had taken so little that it was all there waiting for something to turn up. She lifted the photograph again. A smiling winsome face looked into hers. Dick's girl. Marjorie. How perfectly charming, fluttered Mary and felt a clear indication to tears. Then the arid truth broke on her. She stared with troubled eyes on to the street and wrote in her slow conscious hand:

"MY DEAREST DICK,-

"I am so proud of you. I love her sweet honest face, and I know she will wait for you. I'm so glad she is countrybred and will share your life. It is everything to marry someone who does that. Now I want to turn serious. I'm not very clever, as you know, but I'm older than you. I suppose that means something. What worries me is your father. He seems determined you start in business like Wycherley. He is a townsman and doesn't understand country life. If your farm paid it wouldn't matter, but I wish you hadn't asked him to put money in. Even if he had the money he wouldn't. He says he hates hens. He says that the country has spent millions in training ex-officers to keep hens which won't lay. You say you will come up to-morrow with Marjorie. I'll do my best, but I see no hope. We all sympathise with you. Please don't be angry with your father. Remember his poor health.

"Your loving MOTHER."

Dick read it in the train. He said nothing to Marjorie. If you are engaged to the most wonderful girl in the wide world, and want her to live like a princess on a farm dependent on an overdraft, you don't Charleston over an interview with people like Henry. But Dick had also another letter. It was from the miserable Wycherley, and simply said:

"MY DEAR OLD DICK,-

"I'm at the last ditch. If you lived at home you'd understand. Elvira is pretty near bolting and I don't blame her. What's to be done about it? Uncle Algie says 'run amok,' but he's an old bachelor and has all his past behind him. Besides, he's not a great incentive as the man who did.

"Yours Wycherley.

"P.S.—Elvira says marry Marjorie and blow the future."

#### III.

When Henry summoned them to his room they all knew that there was a crisis about. They found him seated in his

who believe in small salaries and small profits. There was never any rumour that the staff were getting up a presentation of any kind.

The first to enter was Algie Challenger.



"The butler did not move. 'I have a few observations to make,' he said; 'they will be brief.'"

easy chair with Pusey and his brother Jaspar in attendance. They had, as a matter of fact, all dined together over some grilled salmon, a casserole of chicken, mushrooms on toast, and a bottle of Volnay.

Jaspar was one of those business men

He cast an apprehensive glance at Henry, in whose precarious hands he knew his bed and breakfast lay, and nodded to Pusey, for whom he cherished a handsome hatred. The pale and mournful Wycherley came in, followed by Agatha, a tall intense

young woman of thirty. There was a pause, and Elvira, like a medieval beauty with the recognised temperamental graces, smiled in her slow faintly derisive way at Henry, and having seated herself lit a cigarette. Finally Mary, looking rather flustered and perturbed.

presume, sir, you would desire her to have a half-bottle of Heidsieck."

"Miss who?" inquired Henry.

"Miss Combermere, sir. Mr. Richard's fiancée," said Wilbraham.

"Mr. Richard has no fiancée," announced

Henry.

"Very good, sir, but I presume the lady will still require something to eat."

With that reflection on the fundamental urgencies of life Wilbraham went smoothly away.

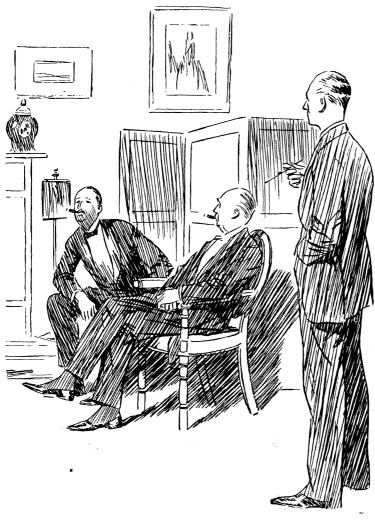
"It has always been my custom," said Henry, speaking with his usual pontifical note, "to take you into my confidence on all matters affecting our home life. By such a course we all work in unison and there can be no possible cause of dissatisfaction."

He paused, and the hapless group of dependents shed their eyes upon the floor. Only Mary gave him an urgent look of personal appeal.

"There are one or two matters which have arisen," pursued Henry, "which will not detain us long. First of all, the most

important concerns Richard. Now I have given him very careful consideration indeed. I have tried to remember that I am constitutionally not sympathetic to his way of life. He takes after the Challengers. I am not prepared to say that country pursuits are a contemptible way of existence—far from it. All I suggest is that, unless they lead somewhere, they are economically unsound. They spell the kind of conclusion with which we are unhappily familiar in your Uncle Algie."

That ancient man, thus drawn so promin-



There was then a prolonged silence, and suddenly, without any indication that there was anything of a national movement stirring, or that his own future was in jeopardy, Wilbraham opened the door and announced "Mr. Richard Fanshaw."

"I shall want you at 8.30, Wilbraham,"

remarked Henry with asperity.

"Very good, sir," said that monumental man, and with a thoughtful glance round the paralysed circle remarked to the world at large—"As Miss Marjorie has had no dinner, I have prepared it for her, and I

ently into the discussion, muttered outraged words under his moustache and exchanged a baleful glance with the other conspirators. He then dived his right hand as though to cover Henry with a sixshooter, and, producing a coloured handkerchief, savagely blew his nose.

"If I might butt in," said Dick, "it is simply to clear the ground. I cannot make a decent start without a little capital. I will of course pay interest on it. You see,

when I'm married-

"Married," echoed Henry. "Married?"

"Here is her photograph," pushed on Dick, under the delusion that it would only take the vision of Marjorie to smooth out everything.

"Has she any means?" inquired Henry. There was a deep silence. It was obvious that Dick had sought beauty rather than

bullion.

"Money's not everything," asserted the lamentable figure of Uncle Algie. "I once

married for money-"

"The situation so far as it affects Richard," remarked Henry, "is merely aggravated by any ideas of marriage. If he can't support himself with his Leghorns-

"Wyandottes," corrected Dick, now on the run. "I know Wyandottes will pay. They are not only layers but table——"

"They won't pay," interrupted Henry. "I cannot comprehend what induced the Government to encourage ex-officers to take up hens. It has proved a waste of public money, a source of poverty, and has thrown the burden not only on the rates but on the older generation. Wycherley wanted to go abroad. Another mare's nest. If I had not been firm he would never have had the chance of getting into Uncle Jaspar's

"I know something about Canada," thrust in Uncle Algie. "I could go with

Wycherley."

"At two pounds a week," remarked Elvira in her smooth, derisive voice. don't think Uncle Jaspar has done so

"Wycherley can go to-morrow," broke in

"He's going to," said Elvira, flicking the ash off her cigarette and just as though it was Uncle Jaspar himself.

"Whatever do you mean?" chanted Henry and Jaspar in a tenor and alto part-

"Simply that there comes a time when anything's better than nothing. If it had not been for Mary I'd never have wasted two good years in this dismal show. I'm going to give Wycherley a bit of fun. I may be common—I've often gathered you think so, but-"

"Elvira," implored Mary Fanshaw.

"In that case," said Henry with a return to his favourite suggestion of the bench, "in that case it is only a matter of adjustment. As Wycherley leaves Uncle Jaspar's office, possibly Uncle Jaspar will be good enough to take in Dick. Will you, Jaspar?"

The elder brother blew out his cheeks. He was pondering whether, under the present circumstances, Dick could be persuaded that thirty-five shillings a week to start

with—

"I'm not having any of Uncle Jaspar's office," said Dick.

"Then perhaps you will tell me what you are having," remarked Henry with exaggerated politeness.

"I want a little backing, that's all. If Wycherley cares to come in all the better."

"Then please understand you won't have

a penny, either of you."
"Dick," said Agatha, "I'll come in with you. I've no money but I can work."

"I say, that's great. What do you say, Wycherley?"

"I say hats off to Aggie."

Mary looked from one to the other in a sort of panic. Then her head jerked suddenly towards Henry.

"They mustn't go away," she said. "I can't bear it. I can't go on here alone. I want to speak with you, Henry. I don't think you understand."

There came a knock at the door and Wil-

braham entered.

"You said eight-thirty, sir."

He closed the door and again regarded

them all attentively.

Henry pulled at his discouraged moustache. He felt the glow of the petty tyrant surrounded by a court of councillors and dependents. He was glad Wilbraham had turned up so opportunely. It would afford him the chance of making a demonstration. It would allow them all to regain their normal docility.

"It may seem to you rather unusual, Wilbraham, for me to interview you like this, but the practice of my life has always been to be absolutely scrupulously fair and

above-board."

At that tremendous falsehood Wilbraham regarded him with the same thoughtful and intent scrutiny.

"I will admit at once, Wilbraham, I have no fault to find with your worknone."

"It was not my intention you should,

sir," commented the butler.

"In fact, amongst the members of this household you are regarded with little short of enthusiasm."

"I am not indifferent, sir."

"Consequently my personal feeling is not shared, except by Mr. Jaspar Fanshaw, Dr. Pusey, and the Canon."

"They would seem to me to be outside my range of domestic responsibilities,"

remarked Wilbraham.

"Insolence will not benefit you," cautioned Henry. "Dr. Pusey has reason to believe you consider his medical services unnecessary. I warn you that anything you may say will be taken as evidence."

"Dr. Pusey is right. That is simply my

opinion."

"You would dare to infer I am not

"Certainly. I would—without prejudice —even go further and state that I will give one hundred pounds to any charity if any specialist can find anything organically wrong with you."

Over the anxious circle of the dependents a look curiously like a slow grin spread and disappeared, and Uncle Algie again took refuge in his coloured handkerchief. Then in the silence Dr. Pusey, emitting one partially strangled snort, rose and left the

"Regarding the Canon," went on Wilbraham, closing the door courteously behind the doctor-"my recollection is that he attacked me on the grounds that I am a Conservative. I indicated, apart from the personal conviction that Churchmen should not meddle with politics, and that he is a Tory of a most virulent type himself, that whereas hypocrisy in any form is regrettable, in religion it is little short of a cardinal sin."

It was at that moment Uncle Algie, who had been listening like a marooned seaman sighting an ocean liner, shot at Wilbraham a look of deep admiration and gratitude.

"I have always said he was a humbug," he contributed more briefly. "Ask his curates."

Henry choked back his flood of outraged

feelings.

"I think that is sufficient," he said sharply. "I had not expected things had gone so far. When you have apologised to Canon Weekes you will pack your box, which I regret to say I must examine, and then leave this house. You will, of course, have no references."

The butler did not move. "I have a few observations to make," he said; "they will be brief. When I came here it was, I hope, without prejudice. But in the course of my duties I found it impossible not to reach certain conclusions. If I am personal it is for a very definite reason. This is a household under an intolerable shadow, and the shadow, I must point out, resides in this room."

"Stop," shouted Henry.
"From this place quite a number of people's lives are rendered more or less unhappy and fruitless. That must cease from to-day. I am sorry, but I can see no alternative except to remove all family responsibilities from you."

"The man's mad," burst out Jaspar and Henry in their tenor and alto part-

"Not at all. On the other hand, I am extremely sane. What I would like to see is your son Dick-a splendid fellow and worthy of a better father-happily settled in the country, your son Wycherley free to write, your daughter Agatha able to find her own destiny in life. And finally your wife no longer a drudge. She is a treasure, sir. You don't deserve your luck. I think all these things should be possible. I have, so far as I can, arranged they shall be possible. Here I have taken the liberty of making a few comments. Perhaps, sir, you will read them," and in the same pleasant manner he handed a sealed envelope to Dick. Then with a bow to Mary and a final meditative look at Henry he turned and closed the door behind him.

"The man's mad," repeated Henry. "Better give that to me."

"I'll read it," said Dick briefly, and tore

open the package.

"DEAR DICK," (it said),-

"I enclose the terms of a settlement upon your mother, your brother and sister, and your Uncle Algernon—all these being in my power and according to the last will and testament of your Aunt Clarinda, who desired her death should not be known to you at an earlier date. The only stipulation she made was that without the knowledge of any of you I should have a private view of you all, with absolute power to act according to my own discretion. This I have succeeded in doing and I wish you all the best of luck.

"I return to America to-morrow, and I desire that with this letter the matter is closed.

0

"With best wishes,
"Your affectionate cousin,
"CLAUDE CHALLENGER."

0

There was a momentous silence. Below came the bang of a door.

Before Dick could fling up the window a taxi was moving swiftly up the street, and, rounding the corner, disappeared.

He ran from the room and on the landing

◉

was heard shouting:

"Marjorie—I say, Marjorie——"

### CHILDREN OF THE SNOWS.

Θ

THERE fluttered a brown leaf round my feet
When the gusty wind blew down the street;
A tawny moth, with wings half-furled,
A-shiver at edge of an unknown world;
Whence cam'st thou wrinkled, eld and brown,
A-wandering through the town?

From alder-holt, or withy-bed,
Twisting and turning, hast thou fied?
From holly-glade whence the Red King's Knight
Swift as ever an arrow in flight
Rode with pale fear following,
Hast thou taken wing?

Nay, this leaf so wrinkled and brown
Has neither on withy nor alder grown!
From the wych elm woods of the manor-lord,
The snowdrop wood above Tyrell's Ford,
Thither to seek thee have I flown
A-flitting through the town!

Oh, there the panting hart and hind
May shelter and sanctuary find!
The hunted hare by hound hard-pres't
Stay sobbing sigh against snowdrop breast;
While with vesper hymn and psalmody
The river is running by.

Brown leaf, a-fluttering round my feet!

Over rippling ford and fleet,

Oh, couldst these carry me this night!

To the home of the snowdrop maidens white,

In kirtle green and folded hood,

A-dreaming in the wych elm wood!—

To kneel and kiss, ere the shadows close

These children.

Fair children.

Dear children of the snows!



# TWO MISTAKES

## By MARJORIE BOWEN

Author of "Stinging Nettles," "The Presence and the Power," "Five People," etc., etc.

#### ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

ATE rose, setting down her untasted cup of tea; after all, Jenny was only a child and she must decide for her—she would be very happy with Charles Malleson—any woman would be happy with Charles, surely.

"You've changed your mind?" she asked briskly. "About that letter, I mean?"

"I did change it," muttered Jenny, irreso-

lute again.

"Well, I suppose you did, as you tried to get it back," said Kate firmly, "and now I'm going to get it before Charles reads it—and we'll hear no more of this nonsense, please."

"Going to get it back?" echoed Jenny, half relieved, half resentful.

"Yes, it will be delivered to-night. I shall call and ask for it—quite simple, really. I shall make quite a good story, you needn't worry about anything."

Jenny sighed.

"I suppose you think I am very mercenary," added Kate. "I'm not; I've only got a little common sense. I've known ever since we lost everything and had to start this kind of life that it wouldn't do for you for long—you're just wilting, I know, and Ted's a dear boy—but, well, it wouldn't be romantic—it would be sordid. Jenny, the

responsibility and the strain would spoil his work, too-he's got great gifts, Jenny-a crazy marriage would ruin both of you—

Jenny shivered; she knew that she was sensitive, indolent, luxury-loving. Kate undertook all the work and all the disagreeables of their joint life; if she moved down to the glass studio built on the garden that was all Ted Lumley had of Home, she would have to face everything unaided—and she didn't really like that kind of life.

"Try and get the letter back," she said faintly. "Of course I'm all sorts of a fool -and I couldn't face it—really, I couldn't."

Kate looked anxiously and regretfully at the rather pathetic little figure in the big old chair.

"You'll feel so much better when you get out of this," she said. "Remember that you are going to stay with Mrs. Courtlands next week—things will look so different from that angle!"

"I suppose so," said Jenny, gazing into the fire.

Charles Malleson had induced his married sister to take in and look after Jenny till the marriage; it was the best mutual arrangement that they could reach smooth away the difficulties created by the difference in the position of the bride and groom, for Jenny had no relatives and no money. Mrs. Courtlands had come to the rescue with great charm and good nature, and Charles Malleson himself had bought as many pictures as he decently could (at wildly extravagant prices) from Kate so that there should be no embarrassments about ready money.

The thought of this money gave poor Kate another stab; if the engagement was broken off she would feel bound to return it—and it was all spent! After a few modest debts had been paid every penny had gone on equipping Jenny with clothes that would be a mockery if she didn't go to stay with

Mrs. Courtlands.

She must get that letter back. She knew the man who cleared the pillar-box; surely he would let her recover her letter!

"Jenny," she said, to give the girl congenial employment while she was away, " you can go through those frocks that came this morning and choose which you are going to keep."

What was this letter that Jenny had just confessed to posting, that she had run out into the miserable night to get back?

Kate, hesitating, in her little corner of a

bedroom, could see the picture, the pathetic incident of an hour ago, the rain falling straightly in the long Chelsea street, the ghastly twilight of a foggy afternoon closing over the city, the one bright thing in the drabness the scarlet of a newly painted pillar-box at the corner where the straight lines of flatfronted houses diverged—and then poor Jenny running along one of these streets, fastening her belted mackintosh as she came and bending her head, in the tattered "wet weather" felt, against the drive of the rain -and when she reached the pillar-box she pausing, panting, her face flushed and wet, quickly as she glanced up and down the street!

She was too late; the letter she had come te reclaim had gone.

Jenny was often too late, continually spoiling things by delay and indecision.

She had bitten her pretty lip, no doubt, and her eyes, not yet marred by work or tears, had filled with tears, of course: Jenny could cry easily, not from pettishness or weakness, but from acute sensibility to quickly felt emotions.

And then the poor child had hurried back to her—to Kate, who was her harbour, her refuge, her consolation, her confessor. How she must have both longed and dreaded to see her, for though there was consolation to be sought, there was also a confession to

Kate recalled her taking off her wet things and coming into the dilapidated room that Kate contrived to keep so neat by bringing forward the workmanlike air of easels and canvases, while disguising the fact that it was also kitchen, larder and pantry.

Jenny had always, however, rebelled at the evidences of stark poverty that all her sister's loving art could not conceal, and this afternoon they must have jarred on her

desperately.

That hateful bit of shabby drugget on the floor, those shabby curtains at the window, the rows of unsold canvases, like penitents standing with their faces to the wall! The fire banked up sparingly with cinders, the screens that hid the sink and gas-cooker and other "horrors," as Jenny called them, and on the table by the fire the "same old buns" from the baker's round the corner!

Jenny had sunk into the worn arm-chair

and begun to cry.

At the sound of her sobs Kate had come quickly from the inner room where she had been changing her painting overall.

And then had come the piteous confession

that had filled the elder sister with dismay, that she was even now turning over in her agitated mind as she reluctantly fastened her shabby coat and peered out of the narrow window into the wet, darkening streets.

What was it that Jenny had said—Jenny staring down at her hands clasped in the lap of her shabby serge frock; on the third finger of the left was the leaping light of a gorgeous emerald . . .

"I do hate it," she had said, her breast heaving, her eyes downcast. "I hate the beastly old studio—and the carpet—and the weather—and these horrid buns—and being

poor—and—everything."

Kate, on her knees on the worn hearthrug, had looked over her shoulder in amazement, and then the sad little confession had come

"Oh dear, oh dear!" Jenny had begun to sob like a child, hiding her face on the kindly arm of the shabby, cosy old chair. "I've broken off my engagement," she had muttered. "I've written and told Charles that I never cared for him and had only taken him because of the money."

"Oh, Jenny!" Kate had stared into the fire where she beheld many a golden dream crumble to ashes as she saw them crumble

now

"I felt I ought to," the girl had continued defiantly. "I don't really care, you know; it was the money and hating this so much. Of course he's been awfully decent—but I don't care about him. I couldn't go on pretending."

"Well," Kate had said quietly, "why are you upset, then, dear, at having told the

truth?"

At the touch of logic Jenny had become

"Of course," she said irrelevantly, "I was sorry at once. As soon as I had written I saw that I couldn't go on living like this, and I thought how disappointed you'd be—and, oh dear, I ran back to the pillar-box and just saw the wretched postman disappearing!"

"Did you run after him—follow to the sorting office?" asked Kate with a gleam

of hope.

Jenny had shook her head; of course she never did anything practical or decided.

"Perhaps you can explain it away."

"I can't," Jenny had wailed. "I just told him the truth—flat—and now I shall have to send him this!" She had glanced

regretfully at the emerald that shone so strangely against her poor attire.

Kate winced when she thought of that cry; the remark seemed to give that sordidness to the affair that she had been trying to avoid.

Of course she had known that Jenny, gay, irresponsible, pleasure-loving, weak Jenny, had not really been in love with Charles Malleson, but she had believed her to be very fond of him and she had thought it a case where fondness would be enough, oh, surely enough.

The wealthy, generous man could give Jenny all she needed, all that Kate never had been and never would be able to give her; it had seemed such a providence when someone so far removed from their Bohemian world had bought one of her pictures at an Exhibition, asked for an introduction to the artist and been instantly enchanted by the artist's sister!

And Jenny had seemed so happy, so elated—like someone released from prison, the future that had looked so hopeless had seemed—well, too good to be true, as it had

proved.

"Whatever made you do it, Jenny?" she had asked hopelessly. And then, with a desperate inkling of the truth, she had added: "You've not been seeing Ted Lumley again?"

Then Jenny had blushed and hung her head, and plunged further into confession.

"I met him on the stairs this morning," she admitted.

"Oh, Jenny!" Kate had cried in dismay, "it's just madness! He's as poor as we are and you could never stand it; he hasn't the right to ask——"

"He didn't," broke in Jenny hotly.

"Don't be a beast."

"I'm sorry." Kate was instantly contrite, but she had not altered her point of view; the very idea of Jenny's marriage to the struggling young sculptor, who might be a genius but certainly was almost starving, was to her disastrous.

She saw Jenny "going to pieces" under the strain of such a life—Jenny wasn't the type—couldn't do it—all very well to talk of love and romance, but Jenny would perish miserably if she undertook the kind of life that Ted Lumley could offer; at all costs it must be prevented.

So she thought, standing there, hesitant, gazing into the gathering darkness that

seemed so cold and forlorn.

Jenny, her little sister, her little spoilt,

childish sister, was obviously in her hands for her to do as she would with. Jenny had always obeyed her, or rather, allowed her to influence her; and now, in this most important matter, certainly the turning-point of Jenny's life, was she going to influence her?

Was she going to persuade her to take this extraordinary chance that had suddenly been offered her, or encourage her to be faithful to the penniless young man whom it was obvious she loved—in Jenny's light way of loving?

Life seemed difficult and complicated to Kate, and she felt, though more with bewilderment than resentment, that it ought not to have been either, but simple and

clear.

As her own personal life was, and always had been, simple and clear—just "the trivial round the common task" quoted so often in the Parish Magazine that she used to help to edit, and which was, after all, the portion of the majority.

Kate had never complained about that—she had, too, had this little excitement of her work; she knew that she had not much talent, but it was more than she had at first thought, and there was some money in it too, which she had never dared at one time to hope; not enough money, of course, but she had a small gift of fantastical sweet imagination and she had begun to creep in among the illustrators of children's books and the more modest exhibitions. It was all very delightful and wonderful, and, if it had only been a question of herself, it would have satisfied Kate's repressed and humble nature.

But there had always been Jenny—the petted baby who in so short a while had become the spoilt child and then the capricious girl; the elder sister adored her because she was so lovely and so loving and so helpless, but the responsibility had bowed down her spirit and made her heart tremble—often enough.

And now—what to do?

There was Jenny looking to her for guidance—poor, pretty, silly little Jenny who had no more sense now than she had when she was a coaxing little piece with flying curls, petted by the fond and simple father!

Of course Jenny must marry Charles Malleson, not that gaunt, eager boy who had nothing to offer but his unrecognised gift—odd, thought Kate with a catch in her throat, for any girl not to want to marry Charles Malleson—couldn't Jenny see what

she was missing? Apart from the money; quite apart from the money.

And Kate turned on the electric light in the narrow strip of room and looked at herself in the dingy square of mirror.

She was ten years older than Jenny and

not pretty—no, not pretty at all.

A very tired, faded-looking woman, already a woman who had never had a chance to "do" anything for herself.

Never wanted, nor longed for, such a

chance.

Yet now, sad and disturbed as she was, the sight of her own face vexed her further—she looked, as she felt, a failure.

People didn't like failure.

She had sometimes wistfully felt that she had been a drawback to Jenny, encompassing her with this atmosphere of failure, of plainness, of anxious and futile effort.

No, it must end.

Jenny must marry this rich man and go away with him into another world, and leave her alone to struggle along her modest way.

If she was alone, she thought wistfully, she would be quite content—without the

responsibility of Jenny.

And then she set out into the cold-darkening streets, the wind and the rain and the murk about her, and in her heart a curious pang that bowed her spirit with depression.

For she, too, had her secret trouble, her hidden anguish that swelled until it filled her whole being; and there was no one to console or support her; she always had been, and must remain, lonely, one of the odd, unwanted people who must not get in the way of or bore the others.

Her errand was hateful to her, in every way hateful; poverty had made both the sisters reserved and kept them from learning the careless freedom of modern manners; Kate knew nothing of anything save the shifts and vicissitudes of poverty.

And then it really seemed rather an outrageous thing to Kate, this going alone to a man's house at this hour; the engagement had been very sudden and not yet very long, and Kate so long a drudge and a toiler, first in the old vicarage days when she had "helped" her father with the Parish, and since his death as bread-winner for her mother, Jenny and herself, and then for Jenny and herself alone, that she had lost her sense of values. Was it permissible or not, what she was doing? She felt so foolish and so futile.

With a tremor she rang the bell of the trim mansion that secretly awed her. Mr. Malleson was very wealthy indeed, a connoisseur and collector, and everything about him was of a peculiarly sumptuous quality in a quiet fashion that pleased Kate, yet rather frightened her too, making her feel even more stupid and plain.

She was shown into a library filled with curious books in pale tints of vellum and faded, gilded calf, and fragrant from an enormous bowl of apricot-coloured azaleas, and bright with a huge, clear fire. Kate, cold and damp despite the dripping umbrella she had resigned with a blush in the hall, stood near the great log fire which gave out this brilliant, generous light and warmth.

Too honest-minded to spend any of her recent windfalls on herself, she was wearing last year's cheap velour coat and a hat of dyed fur that Jenny called "common or garden cat"; she felt more than ever shabby in these surroundings and ill at ease—as if she was already a poor relation, and the small amount of courage she had gathered up drooped and nearly died away.

She half hoped that Mr. Malleson would prove to be out and that she could request the return of the letter in a note—ves, a note; could she not write to him-and fly?

This would not be as safe and wise as seeing him, and was in the nature of a cowardly compromise, but Kate would have preferred it to an interview-yes, she felt cowardly, she wondered now however she could have undertaken such an impossible errand.

But even while she was hoping she might escape, Charles Malleson came in and greeted her as if it was the most natural thing in the world to see her there.

He was a spare man of over forty who had inherited a huge chemical works that brought him a very considerable fortune, who had travelled all over the world and seen and done most things that lively human beings wish to see and do.

As Kate was gaining time with timid conventionalities, she could not help a sudden silly wonder (instantly checked as disloyal) as to what this man, so thoughtful, so intelligent, so finished, could see in a simple little thing like Jenny. But then, of course, Jenny was pretty; men always cared for that—ah, yes, that was it; Jenny was pretty!

How she would bloom in these beautiful surroundings that Kate was so conscious of -this warmth and light and luxury, that made you feel you wanted to curl up, easily, drowsily, and go to sleep-especially if you had come in out of the damp and dark and wet. Kate fought off a feeling of lassitude, a desire to sink into one of the great soft chairs and cry like a child.

It was all so difficult.

Almost too difficult for one tired, simple woman to undertake.

And Charles Malleson was looking at her with a queer veiled keenness, with pity, she thought, with slightly ironic pity.

Kate felt her thoughts slipping from her errand; she almost forgot Jenny. Why was this man looking at her like that?

And how odd it seemed, to be alone here with him in this warm and gracious room: he had switched on the light now, which gleamed and glittered from a delicate candelabra of pinkish amber glass. noticed the lovely sparkle of that soft radiancy and was irritated with herself for noticing it—a trifle like that.

"You look tired," remarked the man "It is really a horrible nightdo get nearer the fire. And won't you take your coat off? And have some coffee?"

Kate shook her head; her lips felt dry. her throat choking-why did life have moments like this?

She was going to break down, to do something foolish. And then she made an effort, a really desperate effort.

"I really came to get back a letter," she began bluntly.

A letter?"

Kate felt the blood hot in her face and her throat even more uncomfortably dry; she had never consciously told or conveyed a deliberate lie before. That was stupid, of course; one should not be so sensitive, so childish.

"Yes, a letter from me—it is addressed in Jenny's writing, but it is from me-"

Why did she say that? Nervousness, it must be nervousness.

"And you want it back?"

She knew that beneath his pleasant courtesy he must be surprised, perhaps amazed, and she plunged on desperately.

"It is about my pictures," then, in sudden terror, "not about money—just a suggestion I made that I've completely changed my mind about—and now I'd rather that you did not even read about it."

"You want the letter back, unopened?"

he asked. "Yes, please."

"Of course—but," with a little smile,

"I should not think it very usual for you

to change your mind."

Kate's relief was lost in a sense of guilt; she had not meant to go so far; her intention had been to tell him that Jenny had written something that she had changed her mind about—that would have been the only honest way; but when she came face to face with Charles Malleson she was afraid to pursue it; beneath his very quiet demeanour his personality was so strong and keen that she felt she could not offer such a tale—he would want some explanation, and seeds of distrust and suspicion would be sown between him and Jenny, therefore in a kind of blind panic she had taken the whole thing on herself.

"You look rather worried," said Charles Malleson, looking down at her where she sat in the great deep chair, leaning forward and gazing into the fire; "it is not about this—letter?"

"Yes," replied Kate with a valiant effort to appear careless, "it has bothered me—rather."

"Well, it need not any more. Of course you shall have it back, unopened."

Kate rose.

"That was all I came for; I must be getting back."

"Must you? I've a lot of jolly things here I would like to show you——"

"Oh, some other time, when I come with Jenny."

"But Jenny doesn't care for them, does she? She's frightfully bored with everything that isn't of to-day or to-morrow," he smiled.

"Jenny has had such a miserable time," said Kate, instantly on the defensive, "quite the wrong sort of life—she is so young and really has had no enjoyments at all; she will be interested in everything in time, I'm sure."

"And you?" he asked lightly. "Haven't you had rather a miserable time, too?"

"Oh no," said Kate valiantly. "I'm different—I'm awfully keen on my work and determined; it's real fun to me, struggling along in a Bohemian kind of way—"

She was so terrified that he should offer to help her—that he should suggest she came abroad with him and Jenny—a scheme the little sister had already passionately brought forward and she had as passionately rejected; she felt shaken, confused.

"You'll miss Jenny," said Charles Malle-

son thoughtfully.

"Yes." She was being honest now and therefore was more at her ease. "But I shall be glad that someone else has the responsibility of making her happy."

He smiled.

"A pretty big responsibility—with one of Jenny's temperament."

"She is so easily pleased," protested Kate, "so grateful for the least kindness, so warm-hearted——"

"And so spoilt," he finished, "absolutely the spoilt baby who can never make up her mind—your work, Miss Kate, you just indulged her—always."

Kate was a little startled at his acumen and coolness; he ought, she thought, to have been too absorbed by Jenny's charms to be able to see any of her faults.

"Well, you wanted a spoilt baby, I suppose," she replied with an unsteady smile. "You wouldn't like Jenny altered?"

He did not reply at once and Kate had the extraordinary impression that he wasn't thinking of Jenny very much; that he was concerned with her, and with the present moment.

Of course he must be very much in love with Jenny, because it was one of those very "unsuitable" marriages that nothing but love could excuse. He must be very much older than Jenny; she had never thought about that before.

But now it occurred to her how much older he was, how different, and what an odd match it would be—this man and poor, silly, pretty little Jenny.

"Of course," he said at length, "no one

will ever be able to alter Jenny.'

Kate opened her lips, but mutely; this time she had nothing to say, the moment seemed to have got out of her power; she began to forget Jenny.

And of all things she must not forget Jenny; she said over to herself deliberately that Jenny was going to marry Charles Malleson, that she must see that they did marry; hadn't she come to get the letter back?

Jenny's letter, breaking off the marriage.

She heard his voice, saying:

"There are so many things here that I would like to show you, things that you would care about, I know."

"I've been here before," she said stupidly.

"Yes, but with other people."

"With Jenny." She must keep on talking about Jenny.

She was here on Jenny's business; that was her only excuse for being here at all.

"Never mind Jenny," said her host.
"You came about yourself, didn't you?"

Kate was caught by her own lie; she had said the letter was from her. She turned her head sharply away.

"Oh, the letter, yes; but it's of no im-

portance."

"Isn't it?"

She was tormented; certain of nothing; everything seemed touched by folly. Was it just the money she was clutching at?

She was thinking of Jenny and Ted Lumley, how she had got between them, persuaded her sister to deny her own heart——

How dared she do it ?—how, after all, be sure that Jenny wouldn't be happy in poverty with her lover ?—how be so certain Ted wouldn't make good ?

And then there was Charles Malleson. Was not she doing an awful wrong to him in helping on his marriage to a girl like Jenny, who did not love him?

She half closed her eyes with a shudder; she saw her action as foolish, heavy with future unhappiness for all of them. It was stupid to interfere, to meddle——

Someone had come into the room; she looked at Charles Malleson; a servant had entered and he had several letters in his hand.

"Here it is," he said, holding out the little envelope adorned with Jenny's scrawl. "Now you can take it away yourself and make sure that I don't read it."

Kate shook her head; her agitation and humiliation were such that for a moment she could not speak.

"Something is the matter," he said

quickly. "Now what?"

Kate tried to face him; but she had no

"Yes, something is—I don't know if I want you to read that letter or not."

"Want me to read it—after coming round here to take it back? You think you might want me to read it?"

"Yes."

She stood leaning against the back of the chair by the fire, so tormented, so weak, so futile.

She ought not to have undertaken this, she should not be here, speaking for Jenny, deciding for Jenny.

He stood near her, waiting, with the letter

in his hand.

"You said it wasn't important," he remarked. "But I think it must be—rather important. You wouldn't have come

round here, like this, if it hadn't been. And now you don't know if I'm to open it or not—unlike you, Kate, to be in two minds."

He spoke as if he knew her very well, intimately. She felt as if he did so know her—far better than he knew Jenny, or Jenny knew him; and her baffled mind went back queerly to that day he had come to her, saying he wanted Jenny. Yes, he had come to her, the elder sister, as if she had been the mother; he had been confused and awkward then and she had had to help him out, she had had to say:

"Of course it is natural that you should

love Jenny.

Then Jenny had come into the room, and Kate had said, in her old-fashioned way:

"Mr. Malleson wants to speak to you,

dear," and left them together.

Odd how she went back over that now, while he stood over her with the letter in his hand.

"I think I had better read it," he said.

"Don't you?"

"I can't say, I can't think; I ought never to have come——"

"But I've been expecting you. I wondered how long you would let this go on." She was chilled with fright.

"Then you know?"

He answered:

"It's been a bitter mistake, hasn't it?"
Kate, staring at him, drew farther and farther away.

"Have you never thought of me," he asked passionately, "except as the man Jenny is going to marry?"

He was almost on her secret; in a swift panic she cried out:

"I've got to tell you something-"

"Don't, if you would rather not." He, too, seemed to be controlling agitation, passion, anger, too.

"I must—I've got to."

He had put the letter on a desk; she could see the white square of it in the glow of the sparkling light, but the man was mercifully in the warm shadows of the room.

"That letter isn't from me, it is from Jenny."

Even through her misery his comment sounded curious:

"From Jenny—didn't I say it was not

like you to change your mind?"

"But I have changed it—I've changed it now—that is why I want you to read that letter."

"Are you sure that Jenny wants me to?"

he asked. "Did she send you to get it back?"

"No; I persuaded her to allow me to come—as you told me, I always rule her, I don't let her think or decide for herself; and this time I have been terribly wrong." Kate was talking rapidly, still in a panic.

"Tell me."

"Jenny doesn't care for you; she was only pretending. And she was too honest to keep it up-she wrote and told you so."

There was a pause; Charles Malleson turned over the letter; the silence was awful to the frightened woman.

"Why was she pretending?" he asked

"Because of-the chance," said Kate "It seemed to mean feverishly. everything we had ever hoped forjust two mercenary fortune-hunters. that is what we were - you'll simply despise us—and you'll be right—but Jenny wasn't going through with it-you'll remember that to her credit—and how I overrule her. I'm to blame all

through." "Is there anyone else —for Jenny?" asked Charles Malleson.

"Yesthere's Ted Lumley. But h e hasn't a copper and I was fright-

ened—I persuaded her against him—I've been a beast."

Her voice fainted away miserably; she hardly dared to think what this renunciation meant to her; at this moment it seemed as if the life ahead would be-unendurable.

She turned blindly towards the door; he put out a hand to stay her.

"Let me go, please," she whispered.

"You must forget all about us."

"But perhaps I could help you," he said "Won't you give me a chance?" quietly.

"Give you a chance! I don't understand! I've finished, there's no more to be said-

"Sit down-give me a moment, won't you? Don't I deserve that?"

Kate stumbled into the great chair by the

fire; she did not feel able to fight any more; her strength had gone with her confession: she closed her eyes and the bitter tears pricked the lids.

Charles Malleson turned aside and opened Jenny's pathetic little

letter: there was silence



only by the fall of the burning logs in the wide fireplace.

Kate felt numbed and dazed; she thought in a broken way of Jenny left behind in the miserable house with the big box of now useless clothes—of the emerald ring that she must "give up" like a child unclutching a toy, but more she thought of something of her secret that she must hide up, hide——

She shuddered as she heard Charles Malleson turn and come up behind her chair it was all unbearable, unbearable.

"Did you make her write this?" he asked. "Of course, I know that she has never cared for me, but she's such a child, she might have gone through with it—did you open her eyes?"

"No," cried Kate fiercely. "No!"

" Why ? "

"I've told you-set us down as adventurers; she's fond of you, you might be happy -maybe she's only a fancy for Ted-

"Then you'd let me marry her-still-if

she'd have me?"

"That's what I don't know-yes, I believe I would. Why not? I believe she has a better chance with you."

"You leave it, then, for me to decide?"

She was exhausted now, she only wanted

to get away; but he would not allow her to escape, he stood between her and the door.

-there have been mistakes. Your fault, you're obsessed—with Jenny."

Her answer seemed to come without her own volition.

"Jenny's everything, youth, prettiness, hope. I'm nothing; I never have been.

Why shouldn't I be obsessed with Jenny when she's all I have?"

His answer seemed to come from far away,



"'No,' cried Kate fiercely. 'No!'"

"So you said." She fumbled with the collar of her coat and felt her hands stinging cold against her throat; she tried to laugh. "Well, you know the worst of us now-

"I don't mean what you think I mean

"She isn't, she isn't! Jenny is nothing -never was-you can't make anything important of Jenny-never, poor child."

Kate held on to the chair nearest to her; she turned and looked at him now with amazement, with reproach, with bewilderment.

"Why did you ever bother with us at all?" she asked. "There was no need."

"There was great need—I had to." He paused while she struggled in vain for words, then he added: "Why did you change your mind and let me read that letter? Was it because of Jenny?"

Kate felt that she was losing all composure, almost all control of her senses; she could not remember Jenny any more; she wanted to cry out—"No, no, no, because of you, because I feel for you what I never believed I could feel for anyone; love, I suppose, yes, love——"

But these words were her secret, her deep and dear secret; she must not say them, she must not admit that innermost reason why she had wanted him to marry Jenny.

She stared at him, with her poor cold hands at her collar, mechanically fumbling with the humble strip of fur, and he, staring back at her, broke out:

"This is unendurable; aren't you going to tell me now, after all?" She did not speak, and he added roughly: "Are you still thinking of Jenny?"

Jenny.

The name was like a flick; she felt that she had betrayed Jenny, lost Jenny's chance, not for Jenny's sake, but for her own. Jenny sitting at home, gazing on those fine frocks that would have to be returned, wearing that sparkling extravagant emerald—

She pushed past him, to escape, to run away; she made a little sound and bit her

The telephone bell rang.

"Wait," he said, "it's probably Jenny."
It was Jenny; Malleson seemed to know her very well—her impulsive ways, her indecisions.

Jenny wanted to speak to Kate. The

elder sister went, creeping, like a whipped thing, to the telephone.

"Oh, Kate," the pretty voice came faintly, 
"you're still there? Haven't you been rather a long time? Please—let him read the letter—Ted came in—and, I really can't
—."

"You're sure?" Kate hardly knew what she said. "Sure, Jenny?"

A little laugh came over the wires.

"Yes—quite—let him read the letter—he won't mind—really——"

Jenny rang off.

"What does she say?" asked Malleson curiously, more than curiously, with definite wistfulness and expectancy.

"Only that she's decided you are to read the letter," replied Kate, again moving towards the door. "It's Ted, after all—"

"Don't worry about them, they will be all right," said Charles Malleson; then he added, "But you and I, shall we be all right?"

She was silent, terrified and rapt at once; difficult to think of Jenny now, difficult to think of anyone but herself and the man speaking, the man who went on to say:

"There have been two mistakes—Jenny mistook her own mind, and you mistook mine"; then he added, half angrily, "Oh, couldn't you see that I wanted you?"

"You wanted me?"

"Yes; and you tried to thrust me on to Jenny-"

Kate was so exalted, not so much by what he said as by his look, his movement towards her, that she found it easy to say, without fear or shame now:

"Of course I have always loved you, with

all my heart——"

"And of course," he answered, taking her cold hands, "you really knew, all along, that I have always loved you."

#### A CHILD SINGING.

YOU are singing by my side
In a six-year treble bright,
Airy as the thistledown

Blown about a meadowed height.

I would have you singing, sweet,
All the day and every day,
Songs without a care behind,
Thoughtless as the games you play.

But I fear an altered note
As the years and shadows throng.
Sweet, be silent now awhile—
There is terror in your song.



# THE BLUE VASES

## By DOROTHY ROGERS

Author of "If To-day be Sweet," "Blindfolded," "The Stand-by"

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL 0

TRS. GARNETT, a large white apron smoothed all over her small neat body, opened the door and showed him the sitting-room with pride. It was small and neat like herself, and there was a pleasant country smell about it. Thick white curtains and several plants hustled the sunshine back out of the window; neat white covers protected the backs of all the chairs; but with the table pushed up to the window and those plants removed so that he could look out on the garden where the hollyhocks stretched their topmost blossoms up into the laden apple-boughs, Daniel Rutherford felt that it would do. He would be able to write there. He said so, turning quickly towards the little woman in his usual impetuous way; he wanted the rooms for a month. Then, behind her, opposite the window, he saw the fireplace and stood stonestill, gazing at the mantelshelf.
"Oh, my—hat!" he exclaimed.

"They are 'andsome, aren't they, sir?" Mrs. Garnett's voice was full of quiet pride "They was a wedding present to my mother. She always set great store by them." The

little woman sighed.

Daniel Rutherford manfully suppressed a shiver. His anguished gaze was fixed on two of the most appalling vases he had ever seen. Bright blue they were, of that particularly crude blue wickedly miscalled sky," and very shiny, with long necks fluted at the rim, and on their bulging sides were violent scarlet poppies, egg-yellow buttercups and corn. Daniel Rutherford's sense of beauty sickened.

"They're very vallible, they tell me, sir," the gentle voice went on. "I've had artist gentlemen come here and they always ask me to put away the vases. They say they're too vallible to be left about. They're so

afraid they'll break them."

"Yes, I am afraid of that too," Daniel said quickly. "I should prefer you to put them away-somewhere safe."

Mrs. Garnett looked distressed. She hesitated, then began in a confessional tone:

"Well, sir, it's like this: since I've had my little granddaughter to keep-she's a mischief like her poor father was !-- there isn't nothing safe from her that she can reach. Now, she can't reach that mantelpiece, so being as you admire them, sir, I'd rather leave them there—anyways, until I have She stopped abruptly and looked down, smoothing her apron. Then suddenly she lifted up her eyes at him and smiled, quaveringly, like a child recovering from tears.

Daniel Rutherford weakened. "Just as you like," he said.

But how he subsequently cursed his weakness! How those vases worried him! They flaunted their vulgarity in the neat peace of the room. They caught his eye incessantly so that he could not work. Every time he looked up in pursuit of some idea, some better word or phrase, the vases violently shocked his eyes, and words, ideas and Just round about what them vases are phrases vanished while he remained staring as if hypnotised by loathing.

Gradually they jarred his nerves until he wasted much time imagining, with murderous gloating, ways of smashing them, of swinging a careless arm and knocking them to destruction off the shelf. He even practised the careless swing, carefully out of reach. Then, angrily, he would make up his mind that he must tell Mrs. Garnett to remove them. But when Mrs. Garnett brought his meals he saw her glance at them before she left the room and smooth her

apron down in a little way she had that indicated pride, and then again he weakened. It seemed impossible to think of a flattering excuse, and a man couldn't be such a cad as to hurt the feelings of a nice old soul like He must quite simply "lump it." But, all the same—oh, those vases!

He liked Mrs. Garnett. He liked her shy, quiet dignity. Sometimes he lured her into conversation, standing always near the door, her white hair strained back almost out of its uncontrollable ripple into a knob behind, her anxious eyes fixed on him wide and brightly. She told him of days gone by when she was cook and her husband coachman to Sir Lacy Reeves—ah, a gentleman he was if there ever was one, and so was her ladyship, she surprisingly averred. They were both dead now, like her husband and her son and his young wife; nobody left to her but the little girl, the "little mischief."

"And I'm old to rear a little maid," she said. "I'm sixty-two and she's but five; another ten years before she's fit for service, and letting isn't what it was, sir. Nowadays, with these moteycars, people don't stop at villages; they just comes driving through, has a look at the church, and then goes on

elsewhere."

Daniel thought as the days went on that she looked more anxious. He noticed the wistful looks she cast on those atrocious vases and wondered what was in her mind. At last one day she told him. For once, having cleared his table after breakfast, she paused in the doorway, tray in hand, looking a shade less shy by reason of an air of resolu-

"If you please, sir," she said, "I wonder if you'd kindly tell me-"

Her voice wavered and died away.

"What is it you want to know, Mrs. Garnett?" Daniel encouraged her.

Her next words came scurrying out as if they were afraid of being caught back.

worth, sir, if you'd be so kind."

Daniel's heart gave a guilty leap of hope. "Well, I-I couldn't say off-hand." He rumpled his hair with tactful deliberation. Why? Do you want to sell them?"

His sudden hope faded into shame before the expression in her eyes as she gazed at the

obnoxious pair.

"It isn't that I want to, sir, but I'm afraid I must. You see, I've had such a bad season with the little maid getting chicken-pox in June. I couldn't take anybody till we was all disinfected, and by that time people had made other arrangements. Except for one week and two week-ends, you're the first long let I've had since June, and of course the season's over now; there isn't anyone coming after you, sir. And there's things she must have for the winter; she grows that fast and wears her clothes out so, you wouldn't believe! And I thought if I could sell the vases——" Again she stopped.

"But need you——? I mean couldn't anybody——?" he began weakly, but she broke in with her little air of quiet pride.

"The vicar's wife would help me, sir; she is very kind, but . . ." Mrs. Garnett fingered the edges of the tray she still held in both hands. "Just between you and me, sir, in a manner of speaking, she's a lady as talks. There isn't a mite of unkindness in it; she's the kindest lady you could meet, but—I wouldn't like the neighbours to say that I accepted charity for Ada. I couldn't accept charity, anyway, and I hope I'll never come to have to."

"I know. I should feel the same," he said.

To gain time for perplexed thought, he went over to the mantelshelf and picked up one of the vases, turning it round and round as though appraising its worth. Something in it rattled as he turned it. Conscience pricked him: he had cast spent matches and bent paper-clips, maliciously, into those vulgar blue atrocities. He hurriedly replaced it. The beginning of a plan had come to him.

"I am not much of a judge myself," he said, "but would you like me to take them to Norton and get a curio-dealer there to

value them?"

Mrs. Garnett poured forth protesting thanks.

"But, sir, I don't like to trouble you that far."

"It won't be any trouble—an object for a walk. By the way, how much do you think you ought to get? About three pounds?" He asked this somewhat anxiously; after all, she might have set her mind on some extraordinary price. But Mrs. Garnett's eyes were shining.

"Oh, sir, would you really think they'd be worth as much as that?" she exclaimed

in a tone of awe.

"Well, of course, I can't say, but they might. At any rate, I'll see what I can do. Shall I take them in to-day?"

Mrs. Garnett carried off the vases and washed them lovingly. Out of the one which rattled she shook some match-ends;

some still remained, but those refused to come. She packed the vases with an immense amount of paper, then took the parcel in to Daniel, apologising for its size.

"That's all right!" he said.

He lit his pipe, crammed on an old hat, tucked the bulky parcel under one arm and started off.

It was nine miles to Norton. On the way he evolved his plan more clearly, putting a last touch to it which pleased him so that he chuckled to himself. It was nearly lunchtime when he reached the town; thirst and hunger ran a level race, but he passed the Red Lion, where he meant to lunch, and walked on along the main street until he came to an old-fashioned double-fronted shop. Old furniture, old glass, brassware, curious odds and ends of all kinds, crowded behind the windows and spread into the doorway; a row of chairs and a settle even stood on the pavement before the windows. Daniel opened the door, whereupon a bell clanged sharply. He entered and stood in a cramped space between a Jacobean dresser and a chest of drawers, peering into the dim confusion of the shop. From some odd corner a little man came forward.

"Sir?" he said, putting on a pair of spectacles and peering up at Daniel. "Oh, yes, yes! Of course, yes! You are the gentleman who asked about the ladder-backed chair the other day. I didn't recognise you, sir, against the light. Did you want to have another look at it, sir?"

"Yes, please," said Daniel, thinking, with amusement, that charity absolved a conscience guilty of extravagance.

The little man picked his way back into obscurity, whence came sounds of rattling and dragging. He emerged once more, carrying the chair above his head, and set it down before his customer.

"I'll have it," Daniel said, "on one condition."

"I couldn't let it go for less, sir." The little man polished his glasses nervously. "Why, do you know, sir, if I'd had it a month ago——"

"Oh, it isn't that," said Daniel. "It is nothing to do with the chair." He put down the bulky parcel on the dresser. "The fact is, I want to get rid of some vases for someone who needs the money—no, I don't want to sell them; they are worthless; but I want her to think I've sold them, because she won't take the money otherwise. What I am going to ask you to do is to write out a receipt for these vases for the sum of three

pounds so that I can take her the receipt when I give her the money to show it is all right and business-like."

The little man put on his spectacles again

and glanced at the parcel.

"I quite see what you mean, sir. I don't see as there'd be any difficulty about that. The shop's my own. It won't have to go down in my books. Why, yes, sir, I don't see any objection."

He went to fetch a bill-form and a pen and ink and wrote out the receipt on the dresser, bending over it with little grunts and hesitations. Then he handed it triumphantly to

Daniel, who thanked him.

"Not at all, sir, not at all. Only too glad to oblige you. But—may I ask what you intend to do with the vases? Would you care for me to see them? They might have some value . . . I might be able to make an offer for them," the curio-dealer suggested, glancing once more at the parcel.

Daniel picked it up.

"Good heavens, no?" he exclaimed hastily. "They aren't worth tuppence, man. I know that. They are simply awful. And even if they weren't, I shouldn't want you to have them, in case she happened to see them. She very rarely comes into Norton, but she might—and, by the way, if an old woman ever does come in and ask about them (she is fond of the beastly things and she might just want to have a look at them), tell her you've sold them."

He read a sudden doubt in the man's eyes and stopped, frowning, while he puzzled over it. Then he laughed and pushed the

parcel into the dealer's hands.

"Open it, man! I am not getting your help to do her out of something valuable."

The little man apologised, protested. "Open it!" Daniel commanded.

The vases emerged, blue and blatant, from their many wrappings; the flowers flared out to view. The little dealer averted his eyes.

"Er—yes. I quite see, sir," he said and huddled them back into their wrappings.

After lunch Daniel once more put the parcel under his arm. He had in the morning observed a useful spot in which to leave it; on the homeward way, within a mile or two of Norton, he came to the place again. The road just there ran for some distance beside a broad, well-clipped hedge which enclosed some private woods. Over the top of the hedge he could see a tangle of bracken and bramble under the trees. Daniel looked up and down the road. No one was in sight.

Feeling as guilty as if about to throw a bomb, he tossed the parcel over the hedge into the undergrowth beyond. Then with a sigh of satisfaction he took the long walk home. All the way he thought contentedly of the peaceful little room blessedly ridded of those disturbing vases. The virtue of charity would be well rewarded. Once he chuckled at the thought of a keeper finding the parcel and opening it, hopeful of

Mrs. Garnett was tremulously grateful for the three pounds he handed to her with the receipt. Tears came into her eyes and Daniel patted her on the arm with the benevolent awkwardness of a man who has performed a kindly act.

That evening, with a sigh of relief, following a glance at the denuded mantelshelf, he settled down to the best evening's work he

had done since he had been there.

But as the days went by he observed that Mrs. Garnett did not look happy. She never glanced at the mantelshelf now that her treasured atrocities were gone, therefore he did not associate their absence with the trouble until, coming back unexpectedly one day to pick up a forgotten pipe, he found her standing before the fireplace, her roughened fingers clutching the shelf, her head down on the back of her hands, crying quietly.

"Why, Mrs. Garnett!" he exclaimed.

She flashed round, mopped her eyes hastily with her apron, and murmured apologies and something about a touch of rheumatism, but Daniel took no notice of her well-intentioned fabrication.

"Mrs. Garnett," he said very gently, "are you regretting having sold them?"

She tried to protest, avoiding his eyes the while, but he took her by both arms and held her firmly before him.

"Tell me!" he said.

She gave in then.

"Well, sir, it's very foolish, but they've always been there. It's like old friends going——"

She dropped her head to hide her trembling mouth. Daniel could not stand this.

"Look here, Mrs. Garnett, if I can get them back, I will," he said, adding hastily, "that is, if he hasn't sold them yet." (What if the parcel had been found?)

"Oh, no, no, sir, thank you. You see, I've spent a good part of that money on a

thick coat for the child."

"Well," he began coaxingly, "don't you think you might allow me—as a very great pleasure——"

Mrs. Garnett raised her head and inter-

rupted firmly:

"No, sir, thanking you very kindly. You've been very good to 'a' done what you did; I couldn't think of letting you do more. No, I shall get used to it in a while. After all, they might have got broke. I don't know what made me take on so silly about the things!"

She cast a brave glance of scorn at the bare spaces on the mantelshelf, picked up a duster she had let fall into the hearth and

went out of the room.

A few minutes afterwards Daniel was striding out of the village at a good pace along the road to Norton.

As he covered mile after mile he asked himself anxiously: suppose they had been Suppose he himself could not find them? The woods and hedge extended for half a mile or more; he had taken no particular notice of the exact spot where he had flung the parcel over. And then again, how was he to get in? He had seen no gate leading into the wood; the hedge was much too thick and high to get through. He came at length to the beginning of it and walked slowly on, seeking carefully for a gap, but the hedge appeared too solid and well-kept for gaps. He found one, nevertheless, at last, a small hole, low down, through which he thought he might manage to get in. road was deserted; he went on hands and knees and began to crawl through. It was not easy. The hole was smaller than it had appeared; it narrowed inward, trellised over with thorny trails of bramble. He began to move these carefully. At the same time he heard the sound of a car approaching along Realising that his legs and half his body were visible to passers-by, he began quickly to draw back. As he did so he heard the car slow down and stop.

Danied emerged, very red and uncomfortable, his hands soiled and severely

scratched.

From the car, which was an open twoseater, a man and a girl surveyed him

curiously.

"Botanising," he said, reddening more than ever. "Grubbing about for specimens. Awful game!" He showed a handful of common moss, then put it hurriedly into his pocket, fearing lest these strangers should know something about mosses.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" laughed the man. "We wondered, rather. I say, do you mind telling me if my front tyre is

badly down?"

It was.

"Oh, it would be!" the man exclaimed bitterly. "I knew it by the way she was pulling over."

Inwardly Daniel cursed that tyre even more heartily than did the owner of the car. How could he crawl back into the hole with those two looking on? He offered help, hoping thereby to get them off more quickly, but the man said he could manage it all right. At the same time, the girl got out and dragged a basket from the dickey.

"When you have finished we might as well have lunch here," Daniel heard her say as he strolled on, and inwardly he cursed

again.

Some distance farther along the road he came to a field-gate and there, hidden from the couple in the car, he leant, smoking, staring moodily at that impenetrable hedge on the opposite side of the road. It was after one o'clock and he was getting hungry when at last he heard the car start up; the pair drove on. As soon as they were out of sight Daniel went back to the hole, hurriedly and painfully dragged himself through and began his search. For half an hour he probed and prodded among tall bracken fronds and tangled clumps of bramble. At length, some time after hope had given place to irritability and hunger, he found the parcel nestling deep in a mass of thorny sprays. Thankfully hooking it out with his stick, he crawled back ignominiously through the hedge-hole, and tramped the seven miles home, where he arrived tired and very dirty. ravenously demanding lunch at tea-time.

After the meal he produced the parcel be-

fore Mrs. Garnett's startled eyes.

"I've got them back," he said, "and if you won't allow me to make you a present of them you must at least consent to pay me bit by bit, any time you are able." Daniel had one or two small schemes in his mind to reduce these payments by plausible substitutes for money.

Mrs. Garnett wept with excitement while with trembling fingers she undid the parcel. She tried to thank Daniel incoherently. The thought of her precious vases being her own again lured her pride to a reckless acceptance of his solution of the monetary difficulty.

The last piece of paper was unwound. There they stood revealed in all their shameless splendour. But—Mrs. Garnett's murmured gratitude broke off abruptly—one of them was damaged. A broken piece slipped out even as she discovered it and fell on to the table.

"Oh, I am most awfully sorry!" Daniel exclaimed in distress.

(That must have happened when he hurled the wretched things over the hedge; one must have rapped against the other in spite of the intervening paper.)

"It doesn't matter, sir; it doesn't, really.
Don't you worry. It's only at
the back," Mrs. Garnett assured

him, turning the vases to show the flaring flowers unharmed. As she did so something else dropped out through the hole. Daniel picked it up from the floor; and turned

it over in his hand.
"What is this?" he demanded.

Daniel was examining his find with great interest. It was a brooch, a large old-fashioned brooch, consisting of a miniature of a child, surrounded by seed-pearls. The pearls were somewhat discoloured and the child's face had no special beauty beyond youth and freshness, but the painting was

delightful.

"That belonged to my mother, sir," Mrs. Garnett explained.
"She was nurse for many years in an old family that's gone now—the Warreners. There was one little girl; mother thought the world of her; she was with her till the little girl was

almost grown up, and then, when she was sixteen,

she fell ill and



"'Open it, man! I am not getting your help to do her out of something valuable.'"

"Why!... Why!..." Mrs. Garnett bent over it as it lay in his palm, her hands clasped in her excitement, not daring to take it. "Oh, sir, would you believe it? After all these years! Oh, Willy—the little mischief! So that's where 'e hid it! I always knew 'e'd hid it somewhere!"

died. It 'alf broke mother's heart, being almost like her own child, as you might say. She left and married after that, and when Mrs. Warrener died (she'd been widowed for some years by then) she left that brooch to mother in her will, saying that nobody had loved her little girl like she did,

and she wanted mother to have it. Mother valued it more than anything she'd got, and it cut her up terrible when it was lost. My

again to get out what might be inside, but it always wedged itself across the neck. I thought it was no more than a curtain-hook,



Willy was a youngster then, and he was a little Turk—just the spit of what 'is own child is now! We thought 'e'd 'id it, but he never would tell. And to think it was in one of them vases all these years! It always rattled, that one. I've tried time and time

so I didn't try over-hard. Well, now, to think of that!"

"But you know, Mrs. Garnett, this is valuable," Daniel said. "If you chose to sell it you might get a good price for it."

Mrs. Garnett looked at him doubtfully.

"I have a friend in London who knows about these things. He collects miniatures. If you like I'll send it up to him and ask him what it is worth."

Mrs. Garnett, fingering her lips, her eyes fixed askance on the brooch, announced that she would like to think it over.

Within an hour she tapped at his door

again.

"I've made up my mind, sir," she said with her little air of determination. "Seeing that mother's gone and the family and all, and I've got the vases to remember mother by, I think she'd be agreeable to turn the brooch into money for Ada—don't you, sir? 'Tisn't as if I or the child could ever wear a brooch like that; it'd be too fine for us. Mother never wore it; she only valued it as a likeness of her little girl, as she called her. So I don't think it'd be going against her wish—do you, sir? "Mrs. Garnett eyed Daniel anxiously, seeming to regard him as a reliable interpreter of her mother's wishes.

"I feel convinced that she would think it

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the most sensible thing to do," he told her gravely.

Mrs. Garnett beamed with relief.

The following morning he sent the brooch to London. Three days later he heard from his friend. The brooch had been valued by an expert (whose letter he enclosed) at the price of thirty pounds, which sum he himself would gladly pay if Mrs. Garnett would sell him the brooch for his collection.

Mrs. Garnett thought heaven had opened and rained down riches on her. Twenty-seven pounds (she was immovable in the matter of repaying Daniel) meant, with the addition of her weekly sale of eggs, complete freedom from anxiety for the winter.

The vases, to all appearance as beautiful as ever (who would guess that the back of one had a broken piece carefully mended?) stood once more triumphantly on the mantelshelf in her lodger's sitting-room. Even had she found as safe a place elsewhere, after all his kindness nothing would persuade her to deprive Mr. Rutherford of the pleasure of beholding them.

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## THE COMB.

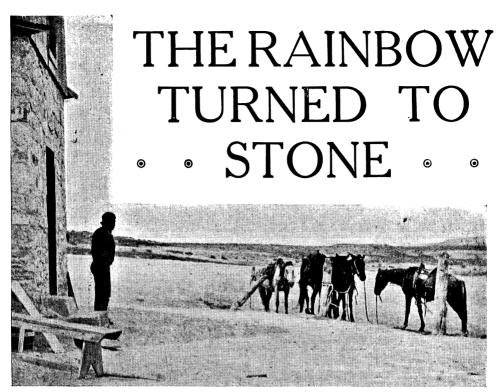
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AT dawn, my friend leapt up and out of bed, And I, half-witted still, beheld him stand Centre of silly dreaming in my head, Sun-framed before our window, comb in hand. Where, O brain's wild perplexing! had I seen That little trick before of tended hair, Bodies fresh from the bathing, white, asheen, Hands combing locks with like meticulous care?

The morning was not cold . . . why did I shiver? Our chamber chattels kept their commonplace,
Both beds asprawl, chairs woodenly as ever. . . .
Only my friend was ghosted with new grace.
And then I knew! Were they not such as he
Combed their bright manes once in Thermopylæ?

A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.



TONALEA, THE LONELY TRADING-POST FROM WHICH WE SET OUT ON THE TRAIL

#### WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY

## E. O. HOPPÉ

N the morning after my arrival at Tonalea, the lonely trading-post in the Navajo Indian Reservation, some two days' ride from the border of the Painted Desert, the fragrance of sage was still upon me when we set out on the trail. Our little party consisted of four: "Old Jim," famous old-timer and experienced frontiersman, two Indians in charge of the mule-pack and provisions, and myself, eager, if inexperienced tenderfoot.

This is part of the great American Desert which stretches south-west of that mighty water-shed, the Rocky Mountains, for nearly two thousand miles. I had already discovered that the desert was not a flat sandplain as one is usually inclined to think. Its vast arid waste is split up by gaping canyons, desolate mountains and bare bluffs rise up from the level floor, and mighty uplands border the horizon. The air in this region has a curious telescopic effect that plays tricks with one's judgment of distance. This uncertainty of vision creates the most

amazing illusions of distant scenes, through a deceiving veil of mirage, leading to very unpleasant disappointment when one's canteen has been drained of its last drop of water.

The level stretches of white-hot sand into which our mules sank to the fetlock were criss-crossed with ridges of volcanic lavastone, sharp and bald. We passed an occasional Indian corral and encountered an interesting Navajo "hogan," a sweathouse where the sick are cured, or killed, by the simple expedient of bricks being heated red-hot and covered with brushwood, on which the patient is laid and left to perspire, the treatment being completed by a brisk run outside.

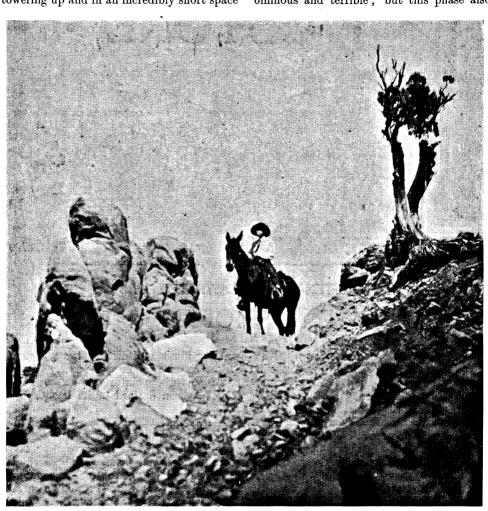
The heat had by now become grilling and there was no shelter from the blinding rays of the sun. Heat waves quivered over the glittering sand-dunes which rolled away, seemingly, to the world's edge. Out of a lake of flaming dust two giant columns rose up; isolated in an immense plain they

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appeared like a portal to No-Man's Land. These curious rock-foundations are known as the "Elephant Feet," to which, indeed, they bear a striking resemblance. Wearily we traversed miles upon miles of nameless red sandhills, crossed dried-out river-beds and scaled barren rocks.

Inky black clouds had meanwhile been towering up and in an incredibly short space

from and rattled between the narrow sides of the gorges. In ten minutes this nerveracking drama was past and an indescribably beautiful sunset followed, thunder still faintly rumbling, to increase in violence as the last rays of the sun laid a ring of fiery copper round the edges of clouds of black and sulphur, purple and poison-green, ominous and terrible; but this phase also



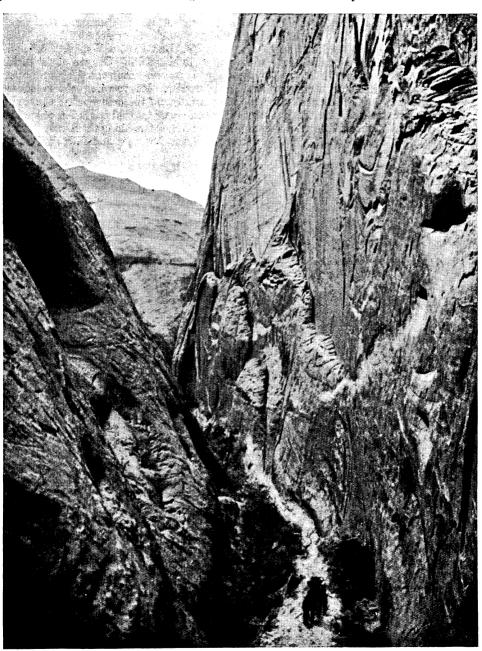
ON TOP OF THE PASS.

of time the fury of thunder broke loose; the storm centre had focussed right above us.

Writhing fire-snakes rent the air in flashes as thick as a man's arm, steel-blue in colour, lighting up momentarily the surroundings of weird and spectre-haunted appearance. The noise was deafening, terrifying crashes of thunder stunning my unaccustomed ears and senses, as the demoniacal peals clanged

passed, melting into the afterglow of an evening sky of palest lemon, against which stood, silhouetted, the majestic hulk of Navajo Mountain, sacred to the Indians as the home of their God. Behind it faded the purple loom of serrated table-land, a mere blur on the shimmering horizon. A twinkling light like a fallen star, on the lower slopes of the mountains' blackness, resolved itself into a beacon of welcome and cheer.

As we drew nearer we could make out the contours of a log-cabin perched on the southern slopes of Navajo Mountain, the goal of our destination for the night. It home in this sublime wilderness. Here was the warm hospitality of the pioneer and much ingenious comfort, even to the luxury of a bathroom complete with a shower bath

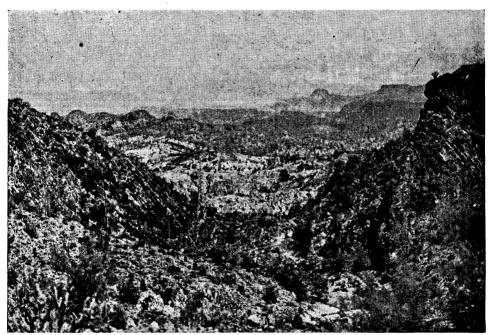


THE CELLAR-LIKE GORGE OF CLIFF CANYON.

was built by one of the little bands of intrepid frontiersmen who, almost single-handed and under great hardships, have conquered these wastes and made for themselves a contrived through the offices of a mustardtin suspended by a string, a prehistoric irrigation ditch bringing the water from a mountain-spring. We were now in territory which is represented on the maps by one of those fascinating white spaces denoting uncharted or unsurveyed regions, allowing full play to one's imagination and spirit of adventure. It was therefore excusable that I felt a certain elation when, early the following morning, we set out on the final stage of our quest for "Tsay-Nun-Na-Ah," the "Rainbow turned to Stone."

The ensuing twelve hours' strenuous ride was a severe test of endurance. It was slow going after we had skirted the base of the sacred mountain and began to cross the windswept stone flats, the "baldheads." our mules, provided a series of thrills. Occasionally pickaxe and shovel had to be used to gain foothold for the animals. My respect for my sorrel mule was unbounded; it was a marvellously surefooted climber and showed its fine desert-breeding; it seldom floundered or stumbled.

At Red Bud Pass, a V-shaped, cellar-like gorge linking Cliff Canyon and Bridge Canyon, we were confronted by an impassable barrier. Its yawning chasm sheered downward, and the deluge of the preceding day had created a wild confusion of loosened rocks and boulders filling the narrow corridor which forms the pass and falls suddenly at

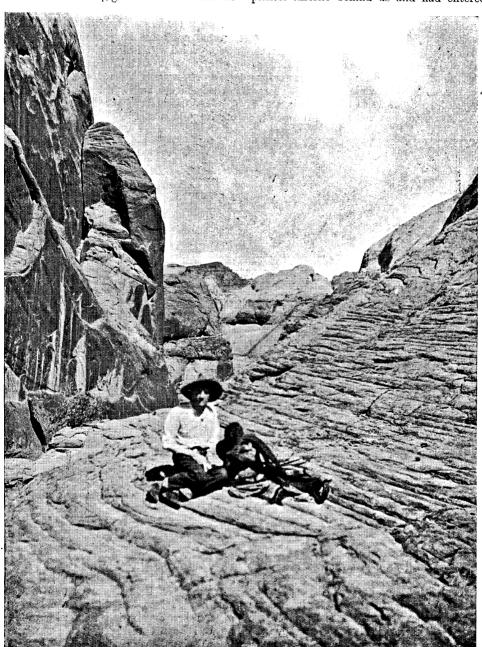


THE VAST ARID WASTES OF THE GREAT AMERICAN DESERT.

over which the horses picked their way cautiously.

A few hours' steady climbing brought us to the spur of a gaunt ridge which disclosed a sight wild beyond telling. To the west the defile dropped down into a labyrinth of yawning gashes which looked as if the earth had cracked. Shadows rolled in the deep gorges and colossal bluffs were bathed in purple haze. Shafts of light shot through the clouds and surrounded a hundred pinnacles with rings of gold—a new boundless world in itself. Trackless descents into the bowels of mysterious canyons, the scaling of forbidding rocks that rose sheer and grim, quicksand-pockets that threatened to trap

a hair-raising steepness. Only by lowering each other by ropes from boulder to boulder could we make progress. We attempted, by loosening rocks and allowing them to hurl themselves into the most gaping holes, to provide footing for the animals, but after three hours' strenuous labour in appalling heat, found the difficulties overpowering. There was nothing for it but to leave the mules behind, divide the cameras and the necessaries for the night camp and carry a mere sufficiency of food. We then began our descent by two hours of harder climbing than I had ever done in my most strenuous mountaineering experiences. We landed in a corridor of corrugated walls of stupendous height, which rose from the rubble-covered canyon, leaving a floor-space hardly wide enough to squeeze through in single file. The walls of this gigantic slit widened as a furnace and the rocks were glowing hot to the touch. I was thoroughly exhausted and secretly relieved when we had left this pitiless inferno behind us and had entered



REST ON THE "BALDHEADS" BEFORE DESCENDING RED BUD PASS.

we proceeded, and presently we found ourselves in a jumble of grey-white cliffs in the full blaze of the sun. Although it was late in the afternoon, the heat quivered as over a pleasant rock-enclosed valley which showed signs of fair vegetation and the promise of water. Never was word more welcome music to my ears than when Jim shortly afterwards, pointing to a clump of withered pinon trees, announced that we would make camp for the night. I almost dropped to the ground with the satisfaction of having judgment pronounced upon me by my companions, that I had acquitted myself creditably in desert-craft.

Hearing that we were within two hours' walk of sight of the Bridge, I seemed unable to relax, so after a short rest I decided to tramp the remaining bit while camp was being prepared, so eager was I to get a glimpse of it. The only approach lay along the stream-

supper we smoked while I was regaled with yarns of my guides' adventures with rattlers and scorpions, and the toll of human life exacted by the wild country through which we were passing.

As the embers died down the sky above our narrow gorge appeared a deep purple canopy filled with brilliant stars; the slender century plant and the cactus seemed to grow mysteriously taller, the world of reality melting in the half-world of dreams.

We tumbled into our sleeping-sacks and carefully arranged the hair-rope, said to



MORNING IN CAMP.

bed which had eaten a narrow passage for itself through the rocks, by ceaseless endeavour through long centuries. As the water was shallow, progress was not difficult, although very slow because of the slippery state of the boulders. Later it became turbulent, the only possible means of advance being by a narrow ledge that ran above the stream, too high up for one man to reach unaided. The return journey was a painful effort by reason of my utter fatigue, but eventually the welcome sight of camp appeared, the appetising odour of cooking mingling with the aromatic smell of juniper wood which fed the blazing fire. After

ward off rattlesnakes. The quietness deepened into an oppressive stillness, and I lay for hours watching the great stars which seemed to increase in size, until it looked alarmingly as though one or two of them would dive into the slit we occupied. A sudden breath of wind touched my face; an owl hooted dismally, the eerie sound intensifying the utter silence. Then a ghastly howl of agony rent the air, unearthly, long drawn out; twice it was repeated before my scattered wits could act coherently, to be followed by the hoarse and coughing bark of some coyotes, scavengers of the desert and canyon, eager to feast on the offal of

the meal left by the wolf, the cunning slayer. My nerves were set on edge and I imagined the air to be filled with minute indefinable noises: a stirring and rustling in the sand, as though some horrible creeping things came towards me. I assured myself that the hair-rope was in place and fell into troubled slumber; half awakening, I felt some loathsome object touch me and longed

to struggle and yell, but could not make the effort, my will seemed paralysed. I turned my head and saw a ghastly white spectre swaying towards me. With a desperate effort I pulled myself together and realised that it was a big white flower within six inches of my head, but I could have sworn that it was not there a few hours earlier.

The return of morning light and my friends prosaically preparing breakfast was a reassuring sight, and I was able to chuckle at the memory of my spectre on recalling that this strange flower of the desert has the uncanny habit of blossoming in the dead of the night and closing its petals at the appearance of the first rays of the sun.

Breakfast over, I hurried my companions over the last few miles of Cliff Canyon. After passing along the narrow ledge previously mentioned, by means of pressing both arms outspread flat against the precipitous wall, and

wriggling sideways, crab-fashion, the pass widened out, its floor now carpeted with ferns, pink orchids, scarlet Indian paint-brush, dark-blue columbines and white-starred daisies—a few mocking-birds which hovered in the air like gorgeous butterflies were the only sign of life.

We slaked our thirst in the cool waters of a sparkling spring, turned a sharp bend in the rock, and before me stood one of the greatest miracles of the world, the Rainbow Bridge, a perfect arch thrown across the canyon. What mighty powers had been at work to create this wonder of nature can only be guessed at. Chiselled out of red sandstone, the graceful curve of the bridge is so perfectly balanced that it is very difficult to believe it was not carved by human hands.

No picture, no photograph, can give any



THE RAINBOW BRIDGE, A PERFECT ARCH THROWN ACROSS THE CANYON.

idea of its magic majesty. I felt "this thing was glorious—it silenced me." A work of ages, this brilliant-hued arch of glory is one of the most wonderful monuments of the mightiest of all architects—Time.

Tsay-Nun-Na-Ah is indeed a "Rainbow turned to Stone" by the supreme deity whose home is the great Navajo Mountain overlooking the canyon—the mystic bridge over which he leads the braves to enter the Happy Hunting Grounds.



ENGAGED SISTER: When we are married, dear, we must have a hyphenated name—it's so much smarter. What would go well with Eaton?

SMALL BROTHER (who has not been tipped to go away): Moth!

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

FOLLOWING SUIT.

By Howard May.

Modern standards of dress are shockingly wasteful. No, that is not a weak attempt at a pun. Also the accent is on the waste and not on the shock. Now, so far as the gentler sex is concerned, this is quite right and proper, and nobody objects. Was it not to their attire that the poet of old referred when he sang, "Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long"? But man is different. He is a rational animal, and if by any unlikely chance he should meet, say, a suit, or a hat, that he really does want, then he certainly wants it very long indeed.

Especially is that the case if I am the man. For to me, clothes are merely so many superficialities, unworthy of serious attention. I believe in getting down to the real, fundamental he-man, underneath. Unfortunately—for my ideals—I am married, and Ethel shares the universal illusion that clothes, if they are to be worn at all, must show an obvious and untarnished newness.

Now it is quite two years since I got my grey Saxony suit. I admit it. And from the very first day the crease left the soft billowy folds of its trousers I have liked it. Consequently by this time it is just beginning to be comfort-

able, and to fit me easily at every joint, especially at the knees. But to hear Ethel talk, you would think that it had already done several years' service on a scarecrow. In fact, she has said as much, but then you must not forget that I am only her husband. But I assure you that there isn't a single patch on it; it isn't even threadbare; and I could easily remove the few inkstains and that oilmark. In short, it is an ideal suit with only one fault—one grievous fault. It is two years old. Therefore if I am to remain within the purlieus of suburban respectability, it must be cast aside, to be used for occasional gardening, painting the greenhouse, or—of course this was my wife's suggestion—golf.

Well, I didn't propose to do anything so silly. For one thing, I hate new clothes. I hate choosing them, detest being measured, abhor having them "fitted," intensely dislike paying for them, and until their newness is six weeks fled, I am one rosy blush of self-consciousness when I'm wearing them.

Ethel couldn't see this—my point you know, not the blush. She insisted that I was shabby, and a disgrace to her, that all my friends were better dressed than I, that my dinginess was the talk of the neighbourhood, that Messrs. Taylor & Co's newest designs were simply lovely, that

if I really couldn't bear being measured there were the mail order facilities—again you see what it is to have a wife—that our friends were shunning us, and that the tradespeople would soon be stopping our credit. But not even this last softened my iron resolution. I liked my old suit, and I intended to stick to it.

You can tell how determined Ethel was, and how frantic too, when I tell you that she threatened to go out and buy me a ready-made. I

knew that was bluff, and I knew that she knew I knew. Because. even Ethel. woman that she is, has a vivid enough æsthetic imagination to realise that I and ready-mades are best kept apart. One fine morning, when our neighbour's prize leghorn summoned all would-beslumbering men of letters to a new and perhaps glorious day, my old suit was miss-Where it ing. had gone, I never knew. But I do know that when perforce appeared in a still older suit, my Saxony grey found a hasty way back to my bedside.

Ethel had still one more card to play. She didn't delay. She informed me that unless and until I decided to dress respectably she would absolutely refuse to share the public gaze with

me. Then she relapsed into a dignified iciness, and assumed a strange, unwifely politeness. Now this is the sort of marital blackmail I can't stand. It is perfectly horrid when Ethel won't say more than the unavoidable conventionalities to me, not even to call me names, or when I tell her that the new way she wears her hair is simply—er—topping. It was too—positively tricky—she had done it on purpose, of course. Usually these tactics win, and she knows it well, too well.

This time, however, I had hardened my heart.

Nor did it melt when, in the evening, she coldly refused to accompany me. I hid my hurt, and left her very obviously enthralled in a novel, whilst I, grimly determined, sought solace by paying a very overdue visit to my club. All the old gang seemed quite pleased to see me. It was nice of the dear old boys. They treated me just as though I were still a bachelor. Small wonder then that the solace proved rather damp, and—well, yes, I know. . . . But Ethel really



Dog Racing Enthusiast: D'you know of any dogs worth watching? Postman (absently): Yes, at 199, High Street, there's a bull-terrier what's 'ad 'old o' my trousers many a time.

need not have waited up for me. She knew I had my latch-key.

The next time I asked Ethel if she would deign to accompany me, there was some show of indecision. Would I go to that horrid club, if she refused? I couldn't deny it. Then . . . yes . . . she would go out with me. Would I please wait until she was ready?

Would I wait? Of course I would. Why, I had won. My wife had called off her offensive—routed. I complimented myself on my firmness. All wives need firmness. But of course

I didn't intend to "crow." I'd let the dear girl down lightly. Must be magnanimous on these occasions. And then I got busy planning out the evening.

"Are you ready, John?"

I jumped up, and turned to the door. What the . . .! Before my shocked and startled gaze there stood, in all its hideousness, a strange figure—a figure that might have stepped straight out of a fashion page of some 1890 magazine. It wore a garden of a hat, an epauletted, narrowwaisted jacket affair, and a full flouncing belltent of a skirt. I gasped.

"John, are we really going out to-night?"

Heavens above!! It was my wife.
"What the . . ." Now please don't run away with any erroneous ideas. All the words

Anything . . . only do please take off that horrid hat. I'll get measured first thing in the morning."

"And I'll go to town with you, and choose a

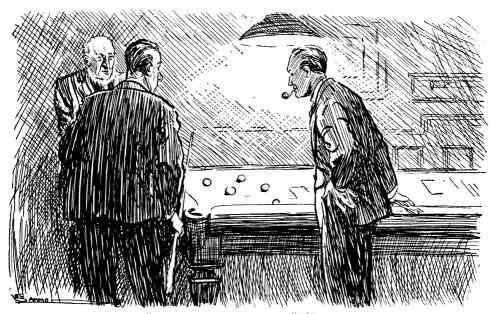
new hat. I simply must have one. Shall I?"
"Yes. Yes. Anything. Only for mercy's sake . . ."

Thank heaven! She had gone.



Dobbs: And did that second-hand car you bought turn out a success?

Hobbs: No, it made me late at the office every morning—you see it used to belong to a Government official and the engine refused to start until 10.30.



"AND ELLIPTICAL BILLIARD BALLS."-MIKADO.

BILLIARD CHAMPION (weather-bound in antiquated country hotel): But how do you play with a spot? LANDLORD: Oh, it's quite simple: we know the shape of every ball quite well.

I used were printable, if only just. At last, however, I did succeed in realising the significance of the idea.

"My dear," I said, simulating a calmness I did not feel, "you surely don't intend going out in those-er-habiliments?"

"Why not? They are quite good clothes, with not a single patch on them, and quite comfortable. Why should I waste money on new clothes just because of foolish conventions?"

My own arguments. And that frightful hat

-I was rapidly losing my head.

"Ethel," I begged. I don't think she knew how she was hurting me. But I ask you, have you ever seen your wife horribly arrayed in clothes which are thirty years out of date? "Do take them off. I'll get that new suit. I'll get a dozen. I'll wear six at once if you like.

ARTIST: One thousand wouldn't buy this picture.

BUYER: Well, I'm one of the thousand.



MRS: You know, Edward, I speak as I

MR.: Yes, and probably a little more.

TED: An unmarried woman wants you on the 'phone.

BILL: How do you know she's not married? TED: She said not to call you if you are engaged.

# TO YOUNG MEN OF 40

however young you feel, forty is the age when responsibilities begin to crowd upon you. You have had time to taste success, to acquire a home, possessions—a family. It is not too soon to face the problem of providing for their future, to consider their position should illness or accident take you from them.

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## THE PRUDENTIAL

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WILMA: Why does she always close her eyes when she sings?

Dolores: She's very sensitive, and can't see people suffer.



EMPLOYER: Well, do you think you can do the work?

APPLICANT: Work? I thought you wanted a foreman.

HE: Which do you prefer, a man with a past

or one with a future?

SHE: Truthfully—one with a present.



WILLIE: What was Noah's last name?
JIMMY: Sark, of course. Haven't you ever heard of Noah Sark?

888



"WHO STEALS MY PURSE STEALS TRASH."

FORTUNE TELLER: You're about to lose all your money. CLIENT: How do you know? I only have a bob!

MAE: Do you like a spendthrift?

ALICE: It depends. I do if he's just starting on his career.

888

Instructor: Now, don't you think her voice is improved?

FATHER: Yes, but it's not cured.

&&&

Dad: You're behind with your studies, son. Son: Well, how could I pursue them if I weren't?

TEACHER: Name an animal peculiar to Mexico.

JIMMY: The elephant.

TEACHER: You're wrong. There are no elephants found in Mexico.

JIMMY: That's why it would be peculiar there.

888

LITTLE EDITH: I'm going to marry a Dutchman when I grow up.

MOTHER: But why a Dutchman?

LITTLE EDITH: Oh, I so want to be a duchess.

# Rare Secrets of Beauty

Many of my readers have written me inquiring about the merits of various preparations they have been using. It is impossible for me to answer such queries here. In general, my advice to women who wish to retain, or regain, their youthful appearance is to avoid the usual cheap made-up preparations. Nature provides many first-hand "beautifiers," and the best results come from using original ingredients. Many of the things I advise involve no expense whatever, the others can be procured from any reliable chemist. If he does not happen to have what you want he can quickly procure it from his wholesaler, if you insist, and you should insist. The smart, dainty woman these days wants to know what she is using.

- "Liver Spots and Freckles."—It is not necessary to go to an "institute." Liver spots (sometimes called moth patches), freckles, and other discolorations resulting from an inactive skin, may be removed safely and easily by using Mercolized Wax. It is not at all unpleasant. You apply it at night as you would cold cream and it dissolves or absorbs the minute particles of discoloured scarf skin, leaving the newly-revealed complexion underneath, free from blemishes.
- "Healthy Slimness."—The most convenient method and at the same time the most efficient for the fat person to adopt is to obtain a few Clynol Berries from the chemist and to swallow one after each meal. They quickly and easily remove all traces of excess fat without exercises, starvation diet, or other weakening methods.
- "Patchy Eyebrows."—To make your eyebrows and lashes grow thicker and darker, apply Mennaline to them every night with the finger-tips.
- "Varishing Cream."—I do not know the preparation you mention, but there is nothing so delightful as the natural allacite of orange blossom. It answers the purpose of a vanishing cream and holds the powder perfectly. I know of no made-up cream to equal it. Its natural fragrance is delightful.
- "Weak Nerves."—First of all you must bear in mind that each of the millions of cells, which make up the nervous system, needs food, otherwise it starves. Weak nerves are starved nerves. Iron-Ox tiny tonic tablets keep your blood pure and rich in nerve-strengthening elements. Give them a trial.
- "Undeveloped Figure."—Three or four ccconoids taken cach day after meals will develop those graceful curves which lend womanhood its greatest charm. Any chemist will supply them, and the bud—arrested in its growth by lack of glandular vitality—will blossom anew and you will become the woman Nature intended you to be.
- "Worried."—I told you to get pure colliandum. The rouge you bought is merely chalk dyed with aniline dye, and is injurious. Just get colliandum and apply it with the fingertip or puff provided. It is perfectly harmless and gives a natural colour that cannot be detected. Rouge is too obvious.
- "Frequent Shampoo."—Your hair should be washed every two weeks. The best shampoo is a teaspoonful of stallax in a cup of hot water. The glossy, fluffy after-effect is really quite remarkable. It makes the hair appear thicker and slightly wavy and leaves a suggestion of the natural perfume of stallax.
- "All Day Powder."—You can get the desired "bloom" by using a solution of cleminite. Dissolve one ounce in four ounces of water and apply it to the face, arms and neck, rubbing it until it is dry. The effect of a natural bloom will last all day or all the evening without renewing. It is not obvious, like powder, and lasts under the most trying conditions.
- "Bearded Lady."—Your trouble is not as serious as it seems. Caustic depilatories are always risky to use on the face, as they frequently cause irritation and sometimes permanent disfigurement. Sipolite cannot injure the most sensitive skin, being specially suitable for removing hairy growths from the face. Get about half an ounce from the chemist and mix into a paste with a few drops of water.
- "Offensive Odour."—You can prevent the unpleasant odour caused by excessive perspiration by dusting the skin with powdered pergol occasionally. It stops such odours almost instantly.



## Dr. Cassell's speedily cure serious cases

Dr. Cassell's cure debility in the only way... nourishment of the whole system. Their fourfold action restores the appetite and digestion, blood and nerves. Take the case of Mrs. Lanham, one of thousands cured by Dr. Cassell's. Her disordered nerves starved themselves by weakening her digestion, and gradually everything went wrong. She was only half alive... until a fortnight's course of Dr. Cassell's cured her. Her symptoms may be yours. If so, try her cure to-morrow. Mrs. A. Lanham, of 49, Manson Road, Mill Hill, Cambridge, writes:—For many years, since my first baby was born, I have been a wreck. Headache, backache, nerves, sleeplessness and indigestion; in fact, I have never been able to join in pleasures of any kind. I have now been taking Dr. Cassell's Tablets for little more than a fortnight, and I am quite happy and strong again. What a God-send Dr. Cassell's Tablets are."

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### AN ANXIOUS SEARCH. By T. Hodgkinson.

It was Mrs. Mulligatawny who sounded the alarm.

"That there Shakespeare," she announced, "'as gone again."

It must not be inferred from this that Mrs. Mulligatawny combines the functions of librarian and charlady. Shakespeare is our puppy, and has all the capacity of his great namesake for disappearing and leaving large gaps in the history of his life.

Unlike his great namesake, however, he always contrives to create a stir among his contemporaries by this vagary. A search party is organised without delay and the whole house resounds

filling anyway, and brought my acute intelligence to bear on the matter.

- "Where did you see him last?" I asked.

  "In his basket asleep like a little angel."
- "Angels don't have tails," I pointed out, and, brushing aside her excuse that she never was any good at natural history, joined in the search for the truant.

His notorious capacity for being on the wrong side of any door made the shed, which Mrs. Mulligatawny had reshut after fetching her brooms, the likeliest place, even though the fact that he was not audibly resenting his imprisonment was not in accordance with his usual habits. But investigation showed that for once Shakespeare had abstained from the obvious.



ANOTHER HOUSING PROBLEM.

THE LADY IN THE PUNT: So glad you were able to come, Mrs. Higgs! Jump in and—— Oh, no, my 'usband won't mind the children comin'—rowin's 'is 'obby, you know!

with his name called in various tones of endearment, threatening and cajolery.

And, most important of all, I am summoned from my study to assist in the search. It was so in this case. I had barely time to rise from the couch at the sound of her approach and grab a pen before Phyllis entered with the news.

"Is Shakespeare here?" she demanded without a word of apology for her intrusion.

"I am working," I said with quiet dignity, "not playing with my little pets."

"Yes, I know, dear," she said. "Life is real and life is earnest, but I can't find him anywhere."

With a sigh I laid down my pen, which wanted

Searching for Shakespeare has long since been reduced to a routine. When house and garden are exhausted, we proceed to the street. I go right and Phyllis left. Most of the shops lie to the left, and if, as has been known to happen, he turns up in proud possession of loot from the butcher's or baker's, the matter is clearly one for the housekeeper rather than the breadwinner.

In this particular case we had also Mrs. Mulligatawny as an additional scout to whom the task of covering several side roads could be allotted.

I am not unduly conscious of my dignity, but if there is anything more ridiculous than walking up a suburban main road calling an invisible









dog I have yet to discover it. When in addition the dog has a name like ours, I am convinced that it does not exist to discover.

Beyond the acquisition of tuppence, which true courtesy, forbade me to refuse and so embarrass the short-sighted old lady who sought to reward my singing, I had had no more luck than Phyllis when we met again.

"Suppose he's run over," she said tearfully.

famous bride has made that the first place in which an Englishman looks for any lost thing, from a crochet hook to a relation. We also looked under and in all the beds, whether geranium or feather. We drew blanks in the airing cupboard and bathroom (hot and cold), and from the dining-room we came empty away.

By the time we had reached the dining-room after our third complete tour of the house I was disinclined to come away empty any more, even though I was described as perfectly heartless for mentioning the fact.

"One must eat," I protested.

"and I

"You'll

"Then you'll have to get it yourself," she said tearfully. "I can't think of food till poor little Shakespeare is found."

There are times when a man should assert himself . . . when he is at the other end of a long-distance telephone call, for instance. But there are others when the weaker vessel should be

humoured, and this seemed one of them. I went to the larder myself.

Perhaps it would be an exaggeration to say that, as in the case of another famous dog owner, when I got there the cupboard was bare, but at any rate it was rapidly becoming so.

Seated on its floor and busily engaged in demolishing what a subsequent census revealed to be our ninth rasher of breakfast bacon was Shakespeare, whose genius for getting on the wrong side of any door had for once produced no audible complaints on his part.



HUMAN CHESTNUTS.

HE: Hello, old thing-what are you doing nowadays?

SHE: Making up jokes.

HE: Well, no idea you had any taste for editorial stuff. SHE: I haven't, I'm toucher up in a beauty parlour!

"He's never been away as long as this before."
"Pooh," I replied, "he's old enough to take care of himself now. I expect he's in the house

after all."

"I've looked everywhere," she said.

"Remember the Mistletoe Bough," I reminded "He may easily have been overlooked," and together we resumed the search.

Of course, we had already inspected the only chest we happened to possess. The story of the

"How curious it is," remarked Percy to Marjorie, "that all your sisters are fair and you are a brunette!"

"Yes," she replied. "But that's easily explained. I was born in a flat where babies were prohibited and had to be kept dark!"



JERRY: Going to be at home to-night? Susan: Why should I? I feel perfectly well.





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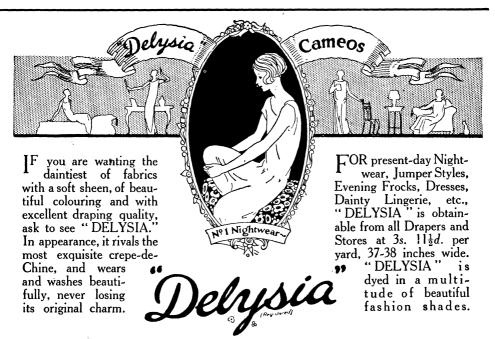
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No. 399.

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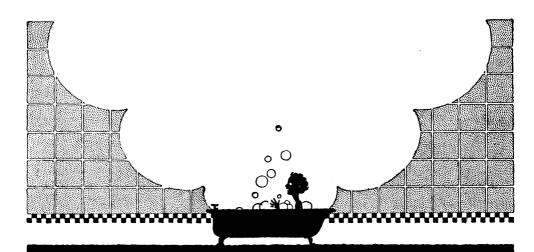
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AND A BUDGET OF SHORT STORIES AND ARTICLES BY SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS WRITERS OF THE DAY





"'i'm firing rabson, too. I gave in my notice two days ago." (see page 377.)



"In silence they descended the stairs."

# THE DATCHLEY • INHERITANCE •

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE POOR MAN SPOILED

## By STEPHEN MCKENNA

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

0

"NOTWITHSTANDING anything to the contrary contained in my Will I GIVE DEVISE AND BEQUEATH all my real and personal estate to such grandson of mine as shall be the first to marry within twelve calendar months from the date of this Codicil and shall within that period legally adopt the surname of Datchley and shall within six months of his marriage give an Undertaking to reside at Datchley Castle for not less than six calendar months in each year after my death. If there shall be no such grandson then the provisions of my Will shall take effect."

Extract from the codicil to the last will and testament of John Datchley.

ROM the days when young Romans of good family owed their education to manumitted slaves, through the days when "scholars" and "gentlemen" were coupled interchangeably, to these latest times when bishops and prime ministers not infrequently serve a novitiate in cap and gown, the capability and social status

T.

of the schoolmaster have improved more than those of any other class. It is now

only in private establishments long ripe for demolition, where the masters and the schools get the schools and the masters they deserve, that men are engaged less for their ability to teach than for their willingness to be overworked and underpaid.

Such a man in such a school was Frank Gauntlett, oppressed oppressor of the third form at Lampeter House, in the county of Hertfordshire. Ten years earlier, Frank had told his friends that this appointment was temporary, as one could not keep soul and body together on his salary, let alone marry or provide for old age. Later he had come to shiver when Mr. Rabson hinted that a hundred other men would do the work as well and better; and, a long time before reaching his twenty-fifth birthday, Frank had ceased to think of marrying or providing for his old age, though to Phœbe Dowland he maintained desperately that his flinthearted grandfather must die some time and, in dying, must end the vendetta which he had carried on for half a life-time against his daughters and their children.

Phœbe, who emerged twice weekly from a Fulham studio to teach those rudiments of drawing which she had herself so imperfectly mastered, would then talk derisively about the romances of octogenarian couples. "People like Mr. Datchley don't die," she would tell him. At such times, catching her despondency, Frank would wonder if Mr. Rabson, who was a widower, had been hinting again that Miss Dowland should aim at a life less precarious than that of an artist without a market and of an artimistress without a future.

Hope had died in Frank's heart when his grandfather's solicitor wrote to say that he would shortly receive, without conditions, the sum of five thousand pounds. The letter, at least, was on the note-paper of Messrs. Plimsoll, Mackworth and Plimsoll, but the startled recipient did not allow himself to be trapped into acknowledging it until he had made sure that no one was playing a practical joke on him. Cheques for five thousand pounds were hardly in the course of nature; and, when in the course of a day or so the cheque arrived, in lodging it at his bank he secured himself from ridicule by saying to the manager: "As this is probably a hoax, you might let me know if it is ever cleared."

The cheque was cleared next day; and Frank drew a hundred pounds with a bitter foreboding that, when the notes turned to powder in his hands or the bank changed to a charabanc, he would know at last that he was dreaming. The bank, however, remained comfortingly solid; the notes were pushed across the counter by a clerk who proved his democracy by being as uncivil to Frank in prosperity as he had been in adversity; and Frank returned to Lampeter House without quite knowing what to do next. He must tell Phœbe and he must warn Mr. Rabson that he would be leaving at the end of the term. . . .

Then a third letter came to announce John Datchley's death; and hope, so lately brought back to life, died again. Mr. Plimsoll was now convening the old man's grandsons for the reading of the will. They would find that there were conditions after all. The money would have to be handed back. . . .

"I suppose, though, I must go and hear what it's all about," Frank reflected, shifting from one foot to another outside the baize door that screened Mr. Rabson from his pupils and his staff.

It was the first time in ten years that Frank had applied for leave; and he was hardly inside his employer's study before he realized that the occasion was ill-chosen. Mr. Rabson was frowning over a letter; and, when Frank saw that the writing was Phœbe's, he divined that she had done something unforgivable and that he would be held responsible.

"You wish to be away for the whole of a working day?," purred Mr. Rabson. "What is it: the test match?"

"My grandfather has just died, sir."

"And you wish to attend his funeral?," murmured Mr. Rabson. "I can tell you that England was leading by 173 when stumps were drawn last evening."

"It's my grandfather's solicitor . . ." Frank replied. "If you'd care to see his letter . . ."

Mr. Rabson seemed a little dashed to find that the application was apparently being

made in good faith.

"Please!," he cried. "If your solicitor sends for you, there is no more to be said, I presume. Your duties here, the fact that you are paid to perform them . . . Your solicitor would think it quite natural, I suppose, if I sent for one of his clerks to take your class?"

By now Frank realized that the headmaster was not going to give in voluntarily. He wondered if he dared defy him.

"This is a matter of enormous importance to me, sir . . . ," he began.

"It is almost a matter of life and death," Mr. Rabson agreed. "If you absent yourself on Tuesday, Mr. Gauntlett, your engagement here will be at an end and you will forfeit a term's salary. Before you quarrel with your bread-and-butter . . "

The sentence dragged its way, heavy with menace; but Frank was no longer listening. In restoring the solicitor's letter to his pocket, his fingers had touched an unfamiliar wad of rustling notes. For the first time he grasped that he need nevermore laugh at Mr. Rabson's jokes nor shiver at Mr. Rabson's scowls.

"I've considered all that," he answered.
"I was going to leave in any event at the end of this term; but, if you'd behaved decently, I'd have seen you through till then. Fill up my place as soon as you like! I'm off!" He would have liked to add: "And so is Miss Dowland"; but, until he had told her of his good-fortune, he could not introduce her name. "And I'm not the only one who's going!" he substituted.

Slamming the door, he rushed to the common-room, pitched his books into the fire-place and bade his colleagues good-bye, wondering—as they shook hands—if they loathed him as bitterly as he loathed them.

"I've come into a legacy," he informed them with malicious exultation.

"Then you ought to stand us a feed," grumbled the voice of that colleague who shirked the biggest share of common burdens and seized the greatest part of their few common privileges.

With the speed of inspiration, Frank glimpsed a method of avenging himself on

them all at the same time.

"I don't mind," he answered. "It must be to-night, though! Never mind whose turn it is to take prep. or see these little brutes to bed. Say that you'll be back in a minute and that you'll murder any one who makes a noise. Come along!"

Half an hour later the staff of Lampeter House was seated in a private room at the Granby Hotel, a little awed, but gathering courage from the brandy-and-soda which Frank insisted on their drinking while he ordered dinner. Their courage attained a new height, if their coherence reached a lower depth, with the subsequent popping of each champagne cork. Speeches were interspersed with congratulations; sudden quarrels were composed in maudlin reconciliations. Some of his guests were still sitting, some had slipped to the floor, when

Frank, turning the key on them, paid his bill and took the midnight train to London.

"Two bottles a head, not counting oddments," he calculated as he reckoned his change. The dinner had made a hole in his hundred pounds. "It was worth it, though," he whispered fiercely, as he flung the key out of window.

### II.

THE next day he called on Miss Phœbe Dowland.

For ten years Phœbe had subsisted on the encouragement of friends who reminded her that great artists had to educate their public and on the private knowledge that, so long as her father's carpet-factory continued to pay, she could say truthfully that she was not working for money. Frank and she had been engaged now for three years. During his holidays he went daily to the little studio at Fulham; and, when Phœbe could not afford a model, he posed for whatever she might be painting, from "The Thinker" and "Dejection" to "The Absinthe-Drinker" and "The Death of Pierrot".

"And what are you doing here in the middle of term?," she exclaimed in surprise, when Frank appeared, darkly handsome, at her door.

According to the time of day and to the competing requirements of art, sleep, food and relaxation, a single chamber of modest dimensions became studio, bedroom, kitchen and concert-hall. A piano stood in one corner, a bed in another, a gas-stove in the third and a table in the last.

"It's the end of term so far as I'm concerned," he answered. "The end of school-

mastering, too."

"D'you mean the school's gone bust?

Or has old Rabson fired you?"

"I rather feel I fired him. And, if the school crashes, the credit's due to me entirely."

Phœbe looked suspiciously at the unsmiling face before her, then swept the clothes off a chair and motioned Frank to sit down.

"Don't mind me. I'm packing up," she explained, putting on a paint-stained pinafore and wrapping a duster about her short yellow curls.

"But you're not leaving this place?"

She nodded, biting her lip:

"I'm firing Rabson, too. I gave in my notice two days ago. Father's stopping my allowance. I can stay on here if I 'make

painting pay', as he says . . . What's been happening to you, though?"

Frank shrugged his shoulders, trying to

speak nonchalantly:

"I've had a very pleasant little windfall . . ."

"From your grandfather?," Phœbe gasped. "I saw he'd died at last."

"Well, he gave me this in his life-time,

a week or two ago."

The girl looked up sharply. Frank was so pale, with such shadows under his eyes, that she hardly required his admission that he had been celebrating his good fortune overnight.

"And you never told me ?," she re-

proached him.

"I couldn't believe it was true till I presented the cheque. To be able to stand up to an animal like Rabson . . ."

"You mustn't abuse him," Phœbe interrupted mischievously. "He's a beau of

mine . . ."

Frank was too much occupied with his own grievances to spare attention for Phœbe's conquests.

"The mangy little tyrant refused me a day's leave to hear the will read. . . . say, Phœbe, it's rotten luck about your allowance . . ."

She shrugged her shoulders with affected carelessness and bent over the heaped-up

"We can't all have rich grandfathers! How much was the windfall, Frank?"

"Five thousand."

"Five . . .? How much is that a year ?," she enquired breathlessly.

Frank hunted through his pockets for

the solicitors' first letter.

"As the odds are nearly ten to one against your ever receiving another penny," he read, I urge you strongly to invest this money . . .

"Instead of chucking the whole of it away on riotous living," Phœbe murmured.

"You will have no difficulty in finding a good five per cent. security; and this will bring you in two hundred and fifty a year less income-tax . . ."

Phœbe looked up incredulously:

"Two-fifty? I only had a hundred and sixty for everything." There was a long silence, in which she turned over the draggled clothes with purposeless hands. are you going to do now?," she asked at last.

"I must see the solicitor first of all. Three o'clock in Lincoln's Inn Fields. That's why I'm here."

"Oh? You didn't come to see me?" If he had not known her so long and so

well, Frank would have suspected that she was trying to pick a quarrel, succeeding

certainly in being difficult.

"I'm in London to see the solicitor," he told her, "and in Fulham to see you. My dear, I wanted to see you before any one . . ."

"I've been here or at Lampeter House

all the time."

"I wanted to talk things over with you. I was going to suggest you had lunch with me somewhere. I want your advice . . ."

"Your solicitor's the person for that," she interrupted tartly. "My advice would only be what you'll hear from him this afternoon. You've been poor all your life, Frank; and now you'll be richer than you've been before, richer than I shall ever be, secure, independent. Never let go of that, my dear! Invest the money, as he says! Your first duty's to yourself. . . . You must resist every temptation to think of other people . . ."

"You're frightfully cynical to-day," he bantered her. "You don't really believe that a few hundreds a year ought to make

this difference . . ."

"It ought not, but it does. You've left the have-nots for the haves, Frank."

The phrase woke an echo of old controversies over "artists" and "Philistines"; the smug, solid bourgeois and the careless, improvident Bohemian. •To Frank it had always seemed a second-rate echo of secondhand opinions: the empty shibboleth of idle Chelsea.

"Not that!" he begged her.

Phœbe straightened her back and looked at her watch.

"If you're seeing your solicitor at three and lunching first, you should start now," she advised him.

"But why won't you come too?"

"Because I must clear out of this place

before this evening!"

"You're going to-day? But you'll be here this afternoon? I must see you again!"

"Do you think it will do any good?"

"It's absolutely necessary! Phœbe, I don't understand what's the matter. Of course, I see you're disappointed . . . . "

"That's very acute of you!"

"You needn't be sarcastic! I know how you love your work, I can imagine how you hate being uprooted . . ."

"That wasn't what disappointed me," she

murmured with some significance that was lost on him.

"Well, I really don't know . . . I shall come back this afternoon, Phœbe . . ."

"And if you think of anything else to hurt me . . ."

"To hurt you?"

"Oh, go away, can't you?"

Springing to her feet, she thrust him out of the room. Mingling with the slam of the door and the rasp of a key came a muffled sob. Then silence fell on the studio; and to his knocking, first timid, then aggressive, there was no reply.

#### III.

Over a meal of sandwiches and beer Frank began to see daylight.

"And, if that's what she thinks of me, she deserves to be unhappy!," he fumed, as the result.

"That," nevertheless, was the only key to her mood. Disappointed? Of course, she was disappointed that he had said nothing about the future, disappointed and aggrieved that he had kept the news of Gaffer Datchley's money to himself all these weeks, disappointed and suspicious that, instead of discussing how they were to use it, he was postponing all discussion until he had heard the will read. While he took her so much for granted that he would not waste time in discussing foregone conclusions, she was thinking that he was tired of her.

Frank wondered whether he should go back and reassure her before she had time to invent new misunderstandings; but he was piqued by her lack of faith. Moreover, he would be late for his appointment; and probably she would refuse to meet him with swollen cheeks and red eyes. He hoped that, as an act of despair, she would not instantly throw herself into Rabson's arms.

Even to himself, however, Frank would not admit that he was to blame; and, when he saw Phœbe again, he intended to rate her, gently but quite seriously, on her unwarranted suspicions. When a fellow became engaged, he did not need to repeat once a month or once a year that his word was still good. One took it for granted, . . . unless, of course, one happened to be a woman.

He had worked himself to a pitch of indignation not hitherto permitted in an assistant schoolmaster by the time he reached his solicitor's office. Then he forgot his impatience with Phœbe in the business of recognizing and shaking hands with

cousins whom he had not seen, for the most part, since he was a small boy; and, before he had disentangled them, the solicitor was asking them their names, ages and occupations and beginning to read an abstract of their grandfather's affairs.

The estate, Frank learned, was being sworn at a figure in the neighbourhood of four and a half million pounds. There was a will, which did not immediately concern them, and a codicil under which one—and only one-of them might, on certain conditions, inherit almost the whole of the testator's fortune. By the will, everything went to charity; but the codicil, which was executed ostensibly to keep alive the testator's name, appointed as Mr. Datchley's heir that one of his grandsons who should be the first to marry. There were other conditions, the solicitor added, of secondary importance; but by now Frank had ceased to listen. At last he understood the curious question, repeated to all in turn when they had given their names and ages, whether they were married. According to their statements, his brothers and cousins were not even engaged.

"And I'm half-way there!," Frank whis-

pered incredulously.

He pushed his chair back and would have hurried from the room if some of the others had not pushed back their chairs at the same moment. They were restrained by the solicitor, who held up his hand with the reminder that those who married in haste repented at leisure. It would be a mistake, he was saying, for them to accept at facevalue their grandfather's sudden solicitude for his family; and a man need not be called a cynic for fancying that the ruthless autocrat who had waged implacable war on his children might be carrying on the war against his grandchildren. By accident or design the codicil seemed likely to bring only a legacy of sorrow. If, as the result of it, old bonds were sundered, if his young clients were tempted to reckless unions, the spectacle of their discomfiture might even be consoling to the spirit of a man who in life had never raised a finger to help them.

Frank waited with what patience he could command until the last superfluous warning had been uttered. Even with two false starts he was out in Lincoln's Inn Fields, heading for Fulham, a dozen lengths ahead of anyone else.

"If Phœbe won't open the door to me now, I'll break it down!," he promised himself.

In the train, his eye was caught by the head-line HERTFORDSHIRE SCHOOL MYSTERY; but Lampeter House by now seemed so far away that he could spare but

Hurrying to her house, he mounted, three stairs at a time, to her studio. Two men, staggering under the weight of the piano, confronted him on the landing;



"He forgot his fears in a deeper emotion as the purring voice began to speak coherently."

little interest for the Midnight Orgy, the Locked Door and the Attack on Waiter that constituted the sub-headings. His late colleagues, he reflected, had carried on the good work which he had started; and it would no doubt be finished in due time by the shocked and indignant parents, as they began to remove their sons to purer surroundings. Of vastly greater importance was the question whether Phœbe was in a more reasonable mood.

through the open door he saw Phœbe tidving the last of the clothes into a tin box.

"Where can we go where we shan't be disturbed ?," Frank demanded. "I've something to say, Phœbe . . ."

She had sprung to her feet at the sound of his footsteps, but she seemed vaguely embarrassed to see him again.

"We shan't be disturbed here, now that they've got the piano out," she answered listlessly.

"But we can't talk . . . Oh, well! Phœbe, do you remember a day three years ago when I asked you to marry me?"

'I remember when we became engaged. There was never a chance of our marrying,

He paused to watch her face; but Phœbe, who seemed hardly to have heard him, was once more kneeling bent over the tin box.

"A pity you didn't think of it before, Frank!," she murmured.
"I don't know what you mean."



"'That young Gauntlett,' Mr. Rabson answered, still breathing heavily. 'Had to get rid of him. And in revenge he's tried to ruin me and the school.'"

though. We admitted that," she reminded him.

"Unless a miracle took place. Well, it has."

Methodically, unhurriedly, she packed the few clothes remaining and turned the key of the box.

"I thought the miracle might have taken place when I read of your grandfather's death. You said nothing, though. When you came here this morning, I knew something must have happened . . ."

"It had! . . ."

Instead of catching his enthusiasm, she stared round the empty studio, filling faded rectangles on the grimy walls with the beloved bad canvases that now stood stacked in a corner.

"I expected . . . or hoped, at least . . . No, I won't say I hoped," she corrected herself. "After all, why should you? so long ago, we must have felt in our bones that we never should marry. . . . It hurt, though. . . . I'm not blaming you, Frank. After all, we've got on very comfortably all these years without marrying! I confess I don't understand why you came here at all!"

"I came here because I wanted to marry you."

Phœbe shook her head sadly:

"You thought of that afterwards! I was upset at having to turn out of this place, but if I hadn't begun to howl . . . It's 'the right thing', from a man's point of view; but, unless a woman's very vain or very foolish, she knows when she's not wanted . . .'

From a forgotten corner of Frank's brain emerged a warning which his mother had given him twenty years before: "When you feel you're losing your temper, count twenty before you speak." He counted forty and was still unsure of himself at the end:

"I took it for granted that you understood; and I didn't want to talk about plans till I'd seen the solicitor. I've no experience of business. . . . Well, I know where I stand now. I'm sorry if I was stupid this morning; but, honestly, I've been dazed for weeks. I can marry now; and I want you to marry me. There's not a moment to lose."

"After all these years?"

"Yes! Phœbe, you must believe what I'm going to tell you. Can you guess what my old grandfather was worth? four and a half millions . . ."

She looked up, startled; then turned away with a shrug of utter indifference.

"And are you going to tell me he left it all to you?"

"He's left everything to the grandson who marries first. There are nine of us; and you may be sure the others won't let the grass grow under their feet . . ."

"So that's why you're in such a hurry?"

"Of course!"

"I thought it might be your affection for me," said Phœbe as she began to powder her nose before putting on her hat.

### IV.

CLEARLY, Frank decided, she had made up her mind to be as difficult as possible. Leaving the packing-case on which he had been sitting, he put his arm round her shoulders and bent to kiss her.

"Ah! You forgot to do that this morning!," she mocked him, as she eluded his

"I wish you'd forget about this morning."

"But I can't. The plain truth is that you didn't want me till you saw that I could be of use to you."

"I should want you if I'd never heard about this accursed money. We were happy enough in our way when we were poor . . .

Phœbe put on her hat and looked, with a

slight frown, at her watch:

"It's a pity in some ways that you didn't ask me this morning, when I was pretty well down and out . . ."

"When I should have been useful to

you!," he was provoked to interrupt.

"When all your fine words would have had some meaning!," she retorted. "It's easy to share four millions, but it's much harder to go halves over five thousand. Don't let's wrangle, though. No doubt you'll find some one to take my place . . ."

"It's you or no one, Phœbe.

"Then it will be no one. I'm not going to marry you, because I'm going to marry some one else. After you'd gone, I sent a telegram to Mr. Rabson . . .

Frank recoiled in horror:

"You're never going to marry him!"

Phœbe nodded sombrely:

"I'm not particularly fond of him, but I can't stand going home. Secretary and general slave to the manager of a carpetfactory! Not good enough. . . . I was really in love with you, Frank, when we were poor, but this money seems to have shewn up your natural greed. . . . I don't know whether you want to meet Mr. Rabson after your row yesterday: I'm expecting him any moment now . . . "

Ignoring the hint, Frank unloosed a torrent of entreaty. So little difference did these incredible millions make to him that he would let them go if Phoebe required that proof of his devotion. It was absurd to pretend that she could be "really in love"

with him in the morning and not really in love an hour or two later.

The girl stood by the window, occasionally shaking her head in formal protest, but not attempting to answer until he had worn himself out.

"I've changed, even if you haven't," she explained at last. "When you left me this morning, I felt I must face up to things. You weren't indispensable to me; and I can't persuade myself now that you are. Then I argued with myself whether I could go back to father; and I found I couldn't. I quite like Mr. Rabson . . ."

"That man!," Frank interrupted in fury.
"So I considered whether I liked him enough. I can't change back by just saying 'Let's forget all about this morning.' I think you'd better go now, Frank. He wouldn't like it if he found you here."

Frank turned to the door without answering. It was not easy to answer the calm, considered statement that Phœbe no longer needed him; and it was merely exasperating to reflect that, if he had written to her when he first heard from the solicitor, if he had obeyed the impulse to hurry back when he first divined the reason of her disappointment, she would have been spared the disastrous necessity of "facing up to things" and of labelling people as "no longer indispensable" or "tolerable for lack of anything better".

Groping his way to the stairhead, Frank paused dully at a sound of footsteps below him. He looked over the balusters and started back with the instinctive dread which for ten years he had felt at the sight of Mr. Rabson's feline walk.

"He's coming now!," he called back in a whisper.

Phœbe, who was languidly reddening her

lips, became suddenly alert.

"Come in here!," she commanded. Though the rest of the furniture had been removed, the rickety screen with which she was accustomed to convert a bedroom into a studio stood in its usual corner, too dilapidated and old to be worth taking away. "Don't make a sound!"

As he scuttled into hiding, Frank felt that in his own interests he did not wish to betray his presence. Though Mr. Rabson no longer overshadowed his destiny, he could feel his heart beating more quickly as the footsteps came nearer. And, while Mr. Rabson, breathing heavily after his rapid ascent, murmured of a "telegram", a "first train", "important business" and "calls to pay",

he wondered in agony how soon the ancient dust stirred by the furniture-moving would make him cough. Then he forgot his fears in a deeper emotion as the purring voice began to speak coherently:

"I was coming to London in any event. You have seen the papers? Ah, they will wait. It's a plot to ruin me. I came to

take the best advice . . ."

"But what's been happening?," Phœbe's

voice enquired in surprise.

"That young Gauntlett," Mr. Rabson answered, still breathing heavily. "Had to get rid of him. And in revenge he's tried to ruin me and the school. It's on all the newsbills. He took my assistants away to an hotel last night, locked them into a room after drugging them or at least making them drunk. . . When they came to, they proceeded to wreck the place. I was sent for at two o'clock this morning. Windows broken, door smashed, the police in possession. I . . . I . . . really I don't know . . ."

It seemed to Frank that the low, vindictive

purr had risen to a sob.

"And meanwhile the school is without masters?," Phoebe was enquiring blankly.

"The matron is in charge at meals; and the drill-instructor is giving the boys physical exercise morning and afternoon. I came up by the seven o'clock train to collect a new staff, but it's not easy to get men at this time of year. The next few days will be the critical period. If I can explain away the scandal, if I can keep things going till the end of term... That's why I'm here. You can help me. If you will come back to Lampeter House... I hardly dared hope that I should find you..."

"But I sent you a wire at mid-day!."

Phœbe exclaimed.

"I was in London by then. A wire?" A long silence followed; and Frank held his breath.

"You said you'd miss me when I gave up

teaching . . . ," Phœbe began.

"And you're going to say that you'll come back?," Mr. Rabson interrupted eagerly. "If you do, you can take the little boys in French and English, I suppose? If you'll do this, you'll save the school! I should have to find rooms for you: it would hardly do for a young girl like you to be living in the school-house. Now, will you come? You can be so useful to me..."

As the eager voice paused on a note of entreaty, Frank waited for the silence to be

broken by Phœbe's answer. She had made no attempt to break in on Mr. Rabson's questions and proposals; and, though he could not see her expression, Frank wondered whether she was reflecting that, when she was "down and out" for the second time that day, a second rescuer, forgetting to discuss marriage or to renew his customary protestations, had explained, even less equivocally than the first, precisely how he could "make use of" her, as she would call it.

THE interview ended inconclusively. Phoebe regained her self-possession sufficiently to say that she must have time to think over Mr. Rabson's suggestion; and, after ineffectual pressure and reiteration, Mr. Rabson took his departure.

"I hardly dare go back!," he moaned, collapsing suddenly. "When I think of the letters and telegrams to-morrow . . . In eighteen years I've never yet had a boy

taken away."

When at last the retreating footsteps died in the reverberation of a slammed door, Frank remained without moving or speaking. The scene of the afternoon had shaken his confidence; and he felt unhappily sure that he would be charged with exploiting Phæbe's humiliation if he offered himself again, and with exulting in her reverse, if he walked away without saying anything.

"You can come out now, Frank."

Her voice was composed; and, as he came into the middle of the room, Frank saw that her expression was calm.

"I've cooked Rabson's goose more completely than I thought," he murmured

remorsefully.

"The coast's clear," said Phœbe. "But I don't want to go yet!"

"I do, though. I must take the key to the landlord. And then I must see about

my train."
"You're going to your father?" Frank was filled with sudden hope. One of her devastating "discoveries" that morning had been that she could not return home. "I thought you'd made up your mind you couldn't face that," he protested.

"There's nowhere else for me to go."

"If you could only forget this morning,

Phœbe . . ."

"D'you think you can forget this afternoon? I can't. If you'd refused an invitation to a party, you wouldn't come begging to be admitted after all. My father at least didn't hear me being turned

away . . ."

"No more did I!," Frank cried. "I've forgotten Rabson was here. Why can't you forget too? Forget that infernal will! My five thousand will be enough for both of us, if we go carefully. Never mind if I'm not 'indispensable' to you . . ."

Phæbe walked to the door and transferred

the key to the outside of the lock.

"No good," she answered abruptly. "You mean to be generous; but, if I said you weren't indispensable before, I must say you're impossible now."

Mastering his anger at the needless brutality of the rebuff, Frank followed her

to the landing.

"Sorry you should feel like that about

it," he muttered.

"I didn't mean anything personal; but there are some things one can't forget. I feel we've all been shewing ourselves without our wigs to-day. If you argued all night, you'd never persuade me that you hadn't been thinking of yourself, of this money, making sure of it, getting out of Lampeter House, for the last month and that you only thought of me when you thought how useful I could be. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I shall think that. The money has poisoned my mind. And you'll think, quite rightly, that I cared only for myself, for getting a share of the money, for securing a home . . . and now for saving my face. We can't get back to the old simple days when we didn't suspect each other . . . Remember that time when I painted you as 'The Absinthe-Drinker'?"

Her voice trembled; and Frank turned on her in sudden fury, clutching her by the shoulders and forcing her to look up at him.

"I've had enough of this nonsense!," he shouted in a voice that filled the empty staircase with echoes. "I won't let the money come between us. I want you and I mean to have you . . ."

"Even when I'm not in love with you?"

"But you are! You wouldn't be crying, otherwise. You're going to marry me, Phœbe . . ."

"To help you win the money? Well . . . I'll marry you for the sake of that; and we'll part at the door of the church . . ."

"I wouldn't touch it on those terms!"

"They are the only terms possible. I'm willing to help you, though I'm not in love with you any more. For the sake of old times . . . Is it a bargain?"
"No!"

Phœbe smiled through her tears:

"You see for yourself! At last! You can't do it unless I pretend to be in love with you. And I can't. Between us, we killed something this morning. At least I needn't kill the last of your illusions about me."

In silence they descended the stairs and came into the street. On a placard they read:

icau.

## MYSTERY OF HERTFORDSHIRE SCHOOL: NEW CLUES.

"Your handiwork," Phœbe commented. "You cooked my goose at the same time as the others'."

"I seem to have cooked my own," Frank answered. "What's the moral of all this?"

"I don't know that there is one. When you were poor, you wanted to be rich. When you're rich, you want to be poor. Whether you're rich or poor, you can be equally unhappy. Good-bye, Frank. I'm rather sorry your grandfather died. But for that . . ."

Frank passed his hand over his eyes. Half-heard only at the time, the warnings of the solicitor were coming back to him. If, Plimsoll had said, old bonds were sundered, if their unforgiving grandfather's heritage were one of sorrow, his spirit might be consoled by their discomfiture.

"Phœbe, for heaven's sake . . . " he cried.

She shook her head and ran from him with a sob.

Hereafter follows the Adventure of the Unexpected Visitor.

### SHEPHERD'S DELIGHT.

I SAW the sky ablaze to-night;
Field of the Cloth of Gold! It sprawled
In splendid garb and flaming might.
Across the wood a throstle called;
Then my heart turned from majesty
To join the songster in the tree.

Shepherd's Delight, the sunset is.
When the skies flame, the weather's right.
Shepherd can leave those sheep of his
Unharmed beneath a summer night.
Yet sundown always seemed to me
The very soul of cruelty.

I thought a thousand creatures died To fill the colour of the sun, And stain the heavens fierce and wide With blood, the moment day was done. Yet, calm and lovely over all, I hear unfrightened thrushes call.

Always, I thought, each joy must claim
Toll of a hundred hearts' distress;
And fate unnumbered souls did maim
To make one little loveliness.
Yet, 'neath the sunset's angry wing
I hear unfrightened thrushes sing;
God's very littlest lives secure
Under the sky's Red Emperor!
DEREK GILPIN BARNES.

(

# FORCE MAJEURE

### By DORNFORD YATES.

Author of "Blind Corner," "The Stolen March," "Jonah and Co.," "Berry and Co.," "And Five Were Foolish," "Valerie French," etc.

#### 

ROM a point at the head of the gorge the man watched the lights of a car which was making its way up the

pass

It was late August, and night had fallen some two and a half hours ago. The heaven was cloudless and starlit: there was no wind: the silence was absolute. All around, the mountain-tops could be seen cutting the sky: but the forests and falling water, the glens and torrents, the superb confusion of pasture and crag and timber and plunging streams were out of sight: a mystery of breadth and depth lay in their place, majestic; unfathomable.

The car came on steadily, making its way

up the pass.

The man watched it curiously, for the infamous Col d'Erreur was not a road to travel except by day. Some of the turns were the devil: in several places water had welled out of its channel to slime the way: there were points where your wheels had a bare four inches to spare. Make a mistake to your right, and your car was ditched: but make a mistake to your left, and you lost your life.

The car disappeared behind foliage: when it came again into sight, one of its headlights had failed. Still, it progressed

steadily.

Terence Ammiral, frowning, took his pipe from his mouth.

"Blind or mad," he murmured. "An' I'm glad I'm not sitting behind."

The point at which he was standing was close to the road. As a matter of fact, it commanded the only place in the pass where one road became two. Not that mistakes were made—a notice-board saw to that: besides, after thirty paces the second road slid into a grass-grown track. Sometimes at dawn or at dusk a driver would hesitate, but that was all.

It occurred to Ammiral that the car would stop at the fork to make sure of its way. He began to descend cautiously . . .

The car was very near now: the steady drone of its engine made itself heard: the man could see the beam of its headlight raking the mountain beyond. As the car reached the turn below him, the beam began to swing round.

The bend was a stiff one, but the car came up and round, as though it were day. For a moment Ammiral was blinded: then the light passed him and the car stopped.

It was a big car, a coupé, whose hood was up. Its driver was doubtless peering to see which might be his way. Ammiral

stepped to the door. . . .

From the driver's seat a girl—a child—met his gaze. No one was with her. Her big, grey eyes had a resolute, fearless look.

" I want to go over the mountain. Which way should I take?"

"You can't-by night," said Ammiral.

"Is it closed?"

" No, but—"

"Which is the way, please?" Ammiral hesitated. Then—

"Don't be unreasonable," he said. "I know the pass very well, but I wouldn't drive over by night for a thousand pounds. You've been awfully lucky to get as far as you have, but what you've passed is nothing to what's ahead."

"I must go on," said the girl. "Which

is the way?""

The car was plainly heavy, and the lady was plainly tired: her knee was quivering under the strain of holding the brake-pedal down.

"Excuse me," said Ammiral, and, with that, he mounted the step and clapped the hand-brake on.

The girl had it off in an instant, but she

let in her clutch too fast, and the engine stopped.

As the car fell back, Ammiral applied the brake. Then he switched off the engine and kept his hand over the key.

"How dare you?" flamed the girl. "How——"

"Listen to me," said Ammiral. "In the first place you've nothing to fear. We're both of us English, and-"

"I'm not. I'm American."

"Well, we both speak English and we're both in a foreign land. Secondly, I'm older than you. Thirdly, I'm at your service in every possible way. If it was safe, I'd drive you over the pass."

The girl's lip curled.

"I'm not afraid," she said.

"I know," said Ammiral. "That's the difference between us. Never mind. If you must go on, you must walk. You can leave the car here, and I'll walk with you over the pass."

The girl shook her head.

"Thank you," she said. "I think you're trying to help, but you don't understand. I can't leave the car, and I've simply got to get on. You say you're at my service. Then say nothing of having seen me and let me go."

Ammiral hesitated. Then he took the

key from the switch.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I won't. I haven't the right. You see, you don't know, and I do. There are bends coming on which you'll have to reverse—with a precipice waiting and not so much as a kerb. I'll drive you over at dawn. swear I will. But not to-night. And I won't let you go alone."

The girl looked him full in the eyes.

"Is that true—about the bends?"

"It is indeed," said Ammiral. "You'll see for yourself to-morrow. I tell you, I'd drive you up now, if I dared. It's because I know what's coming that I'm afraid."

"Oh, that's rot," said the girl. "I take it back. The truth is you're not such a fool." She looked round helplessly. seem to be in your hands. What shall I do ? "

"Put the car there," said Ammiral, pointing to the road on the right. With that, he unlocked the switch.

The girl obeyed.

"And now?" she said.

The man pointed up the track.

"I'm encamped up there-about ten minutes away."

"All by yourself? What fun."

"It is rather. I've got a dog: he's guarding the camp. Will you come and have supper? Or shall I bring some down?"

The girl turned out the lights and opened

"I'll come. I'm tired of sitting. May I wash my face and hands?"

"Of course," said Ammiral.

For five minutes they walked in silence. Then a glow leaped out of the darkness a little ahead.

"My beacon," said Ammiral.

"Good," said the girl. "I'm tired. I've come a long way." She threw up her head and breathed deep. "What lovely air."

"The top of the world," said the man, "is the only place. Once you've tasted its fare, you're spoiled for everything else. Will you give me your hand here? It's rather treacherous going, until we're over the

As he spoke, the gush of water came to their ears.

The girl put her hand in his without a word.

Twice she stumbled, and each time he held her up.

When they came to the water, he paused. "You'll never do it," he said, "in highheeled shoes. Will you let me carry you over?"

" Yes."

Ammiral picked her up, walked through the icy water and set her down on the turf.

Two minutes later a nose was thrust into his hand.

"Well, Roster. And here's a lady that likes good dogs."

"How did you know?" said the girl, caressing the eager muzzle at the hem of her dress.

"Instinct," said Ammiral shortly. you go in?"

The girl stepped under the canvas. Then she cried out with surprise, as well she might.

The tent was a small marquee, divided in two by a curtain of soft, grey rep. The walls and roof were lined with the same material, and an aged Persian carpet covered the floor. A table and one or two chairs were all the furniture: a candle-lantern was shedding a decent light.

Ammiral stepped to the curtains and felt for a switch. The next moment, beyond the curtain, the tent was brilliantly lit.

"I'm going to the kitchen," said the man, "to raise some food. I shall be away ten minutes. You'd like to wash, while I'm gone. There's water behind the curtains, and soap and towels."

"Thank you very much," said the girl. She pulled off her hat. "This is better

than the Col d'Erreur."

"I'm so glad you think so," said Ammiral.

Supper had been served and eaten: by the man's direction, a small bottle of wine had been drunk, and the lady sat back in her chair, with a cigarette in her hand and the Airedale's head in her lap.

"My name," said the man, "is Ammiral. Terence Sadleir Ammiral. Please don't think

I want to know yours."

"My name's Elaine Carey. I'm twentyone next Tuesday, and I'm running away." "What ever from?" said Ammiral.

"The most hideous thing," said Elaine. She put a hand over her eyes. "Marriage. To a Frenchman, of course. You see, my step-mother's French. My father was very rich. He left me two-thirds of his fortune provided I didn't marry before I was twenty-one. If I did, it went to my stepmother—every cent. But I never knew that. . . . I was to have married her son —it was all arranged. They told me father had wished it—showed me a letter in which he said it was the wish of his heart. Forged, I suppose; but I believed it. We were to have been married in June. Then one day he married a typist, without a word. I was too thankful, but step-mother went off the deep end. Of course, it tore everything up. If only I'd known . . .

"Ten days later the two of us sailed for France. You see, she hadn't much time, and, being French, I suppose, she knows the ropes. Besides, I can't speak a word. We came to a *château* near Biarritz that her mother has. All the family were there—the most poisonous crowd. The worst was a nephew, Georges. He looked like a third-class waiter. If ever we went into Biarritz,

I was ashamed to be seen . . .

"One day I had to go to the Mairie—something about my passport. Heaven knows what I said and signed: they saw me through—I tell you, I can't speak a word. And then, this morning, a housemaid came to my room. She used to serve English people and knows a few words. She asked if, when I was married, I'd take her as maid. Of course I laughed and said there was plenty of time. She stared at that, and, after a little, I found that I was to marry Georges to-morrow at twelve

o'clock. At the Mairie, of course. The whole thing had been arranged. If I resisted, I was mad—the doctors were there

"When she was gone, I felt dazed. I couldn't believe that such a thing could be done. Then I saw how easy it was. Manners, customs and a language I didn't know. The pack of them against me—as well as my own signature, as likely as not. What I couldn't understand was why. Why must I be married like this against my will? I went straight to my step-mother's room to have it out. She wasn't there, but a letter from father's lawyer was on the floor. I read it and saw the whole thing. Of course, he's in on the deal. He and she are my guardians, my two trustees. . . .

"Well, the obvious thing to do was to disappear. Once I'm of age the game's up. A consul might have helped me, but stepmother's very slim, and I'm still her ward. And then the doctors." Her hand began to tremble. "That's what I really fear. I didn't know they were doctors, until the housemaid spoke: but one was always with us wherever we went. I think the notion's been spread that I'm not myself...

"I just went straight to the stables and took the car. I didn't dare take any luggage. I drove to Bordeaux. There I stopped for petrol and asked for the Paris road. But I didn't take it—I doubled, and drove for the Pyrenees. There's a place called Vernet-les-Bains. . . . Father had a chef called Henri. I always liked him, and, when he left us, he cried. He lives at Vernet-les-Bains, where he keeps a little hotel. If I can get there, he'll help me. Stepmother sent him away."

Ammiral stepped to the table and took up a map.

After a moment—

"From here to Vernet," he said, "is between two and three hundred miles. Very severe going. It's asking a lot of a car to do it all in a day. D'you know whether Henri's there?"

"I imagine so. He sent me a card at Christmas."

"If he isn't, what will you do? I mean, I'll go with you, of course: but, if we can't find him . . ."

"We can try," said Elaine. "I don't know another soul."

"Even if we do," said Ammiral, "we're advertising your presence all the way. The car's got numbers and you don't see a

Packard coupé every day. Have you got your papers?"

"I have none. The car is mine, but stepmother said I'd better not drive in France."

Ammiral frowned.

"Can you tell me at all where you were when you put on your lights? I mean, from there on they wouldn't see you."

The girl thought for a moment. Then—"I had them on," she said, "when I

came to a place called Aire."

ask some questions. But you haven't asked one that counts."

"I know. I believe what you say. I've seen people out for money. And I think you were very prudent to disappear. In fact, if you'd got a passport, I'd take you straight to England: there—well, you'd be safe enough there."

"You're very kind," said the girl tremulously. "I've had such a rotten time, and

,,



"'I shall look for your coming,' she said. 'I can't begin to thank you and I'm not going to try."

Ammiral returned to the map.

"That's right," he said. "Aire. About sixty miles away. Where did you last take in petrol?"

" Not since Bordeaux."

"Which means that we'll have to fill up at the first village over the pass. And that's a pity, for just at the moment you're sixty miles out of their ken."

The girl rose to her feet.

"D'you believe me?" she said. "It's such a fantastic tale that I thought you'd

The flap of the tent swayed, and she started violently.

"What was that?" she cried.

"The wind," said Ammiral. "See. Roster hasn't moved."

The girl was shaking like a leaf.

Ammiral stepped to her side, put his arm round her shoulders and took her hand.

"You must stay here," he said. "I won't let you down. The camp's out of sight of the road, and, with Roster and me to guard you, you'll be as safe as a house. And then, on Tuesday . . ."

The girl stopped shaking and held his hand very tight. Then she went down on her knees and made much of the dog.

After perhaps a minute—

"You're very good to me," she said.
"I'll—I'll be very glad to stay. But the

"I'll fix the car," said Ammiral.

Elaine returned to the dog.

- "He'll fix it, he says, Roster. I can't think how he'll do it, but I'm not going to ask. I believe him, you see." The dog licked her face. "And I don't feel afraid any more with him and you." She flicked the tears from her eyes and got to her feet. "Oh, but I'm tired, Mr. Ammiral. And that ought to show you that you've managed to take the strain."
- "Sit down," said Ammiral, smiling.

  "And listen to me for two minutes and then you shall go to bed."

The girl sank into a chair.

"This car," said her host. "I've got two gallons of petrol and I'm going to drive her back as far as she'll go."

"Not now?" cried Elaine.

"At once, of course. If the petrol holds out, I'll be through Aire long before dawn. Then I'll drive her into a wood and take the train back. With luck I should be back here soon after midday. But I might not get in till evening. In any event, remember you're perfectly safe. Roster will guard you to the death, and I'll give you my pistol, to make you feel safer still. But you mustn't stir out of this tent till I come back. I'll leave some food for you both before I go. And now to bed."

The girl rose at once.

When he had shown her the switches, she

put her two hands in his.

"I shall look for your coming," she said.
"I can't begin to thank you and I'm not going to try. But I'll be very happy and thankful to see you again."

Twenty minutes later the little camp was in darkness, Roster was listening to the breathing of his delicate charge, and the coupé was stealing back the way it had

come.

"And I brought you some shoes," said Ammiral. "I do hope they'll fit. I didn't dare get any stockings or anything else of that sort. But shoes seemed essential."

He produced a very small pair of rubber-

soled shoes.

Elaine cried out with delight.

"Oh, how splendid!"

She whipped off a little slipper and put out her foot. The man went down on his knees and, using a card as a shoe-horn, fitted the shoe.

"Like a glove," said the girl. "What a wonderful eye you must have. And now I've got everything. I can wash my stockings and go without till they're dry: and if you could spare one or two of your white silk shirts..."

"My wardrobe's at your service," said

Ammiral, fitting the second shoe.

"Like everything else that you have. Why are you so good to me?"

The man looked up into the eager face.

"You've a compelling way." He rose to his feet. "And now I must bathe in the brook and make myself clean. And then we'll have tea."

Elaine stared at the plates and the glasses

which she had used.

"I can wash these up," she said. "If you'll bring a tub of hot water, I'd like to do my bit."

Ammiral hesitated. Then-

"All right," he said. "But first I must light the fire. While the water's boiling, I'll bathe and change. You shall wash up while I shave. And then we'll have tea. But I think, first of all, I'll take my gear out of the bedroom, if I may go in."

out of the bedroom, if I may go in."

"No. I can't have that," said Elaine.

"I suppose you'll insist that I sleep there, as I did till midday to-day. But I won't have you take out your things. I'll be out of the room by seven or any hour that you like. And then you can get up in comfort."

"My dear," said Ammiral. "I flatly refuse. I've a car fifty paces away, crying out to be used. There's nothing the matter with its mirror, and——"

"You can't dress in a car," said Elaine.

"And supposing it's wet. And I know those driving-mirrors: you can't see a thing. Why can't you do as I say?"

Ammiral pointed to the curtains.

"Because that is your apartment, so long as you stay—your private, personal chamber, your very own. I want us both to feel that."

Elaine sat back helplessly.

"This is Quixotic," she said. "I wonder you don't decide to sleep in the car."

"I'm going to."

Elaine sprang to her feet.

"In that case I'm going," she said. "I simply won't stay on here at such a cost.

Good heavens, my dear, I trust you. I've put myself in your hands. There's no question of compromise, for no one will ever know. Besides, I want you near me. Last night I woke in the night and was frightened to death. If Roster could talk, he'd tell you." She came to Ammiral's side and laid her right hand on his arm. "Mr. Ammiral—Terence, please let me have my way. You've put me under a debt that can't be reckoned—an obligation that I can never lift. Let me contribute something . . . You give me the whole of this tent —this exquisite little home that I shall never forget. Very well. I accept it. And now I give half of it back. Do me the honour to take it. I'll make your bed every evening, before I go to my own, and, as soon as you're up in the morning, I'll do the rooms. Please say you agree to this. It's little enough."

Ammiral looked at the fingers that lay on his arm. These were firm and wellshaped, rosy, beautifully kept. The slenderness of the third was protested by an Antoinette ring. Slowly he raised his head to meet

the steady, grey eyes.

"There's no obligation," he said. "I'm very proud of my guest. Indeed, I'm very lucky. Any man would jump at the chance

of waiting on you."

"D'you think I'd let any man? Any man that I've ever seen? It's because you're different that I didn't clear out last night directly you'd gone. I let you shoe me just now—without a thought. No man's ever done that, outside a store. I'm not giving you any favours, because I've none to give you. Other men, yes: but not you. Can you understand? I call you 'Terence', and I hope you'll call me 'Elaine'. There's no favour there—it's natural. And so, as my treasury's empty, I want to play my part in keeping your home."

"All right," said Ammiral suddenly. Elaine clapped her hands. "But, if your treasury's empty, so is mine. I didn't mind being alone. I've been here alone for a month. But, if I had found you gone this afternoon—I should have felt very left."

"I'm so glad," said the girl simply. "And please try and call me 'Elaine'. I suppose I mayn't make the tea, while you're

having your bathe?"

"Certainly not," said Ammiral. "You mustn't go out till dusk. But we might get up early to-morrow—as soon as it's light. Then we can go as we please for two or three hours. I've never seen anyone here before eight o'clock."

"But can't I just-"

"Look here," said Ammiral. "I absolutely refuse to——"

A peal of laughter interrupted him.

"Oh, Terry dear, I love you when you get on your horse. And now call me 'Elaine'."

"Elaine is a wicked child," said Ammiral shakily.

That evening, when dusk had come in, they walked for an hour in the shadows, but when Ammiral would have lingered, a slight hand laid hold of his arm and haled him back.

"You've had no sleep at all for a day and a night and a day, and you're going to get up at dawn to give me a run. Besides, by now they've probably traced me to Aire, and to-morrow will be the first of the dangerous days."

"Let's stay a little, Elaine. I'm perfectly

 $\operatorname{resh.}$ "

"Not another minute. Besides, I want my meal. And I think it's a good thing I came. I don't believe you half looked after yourself. Your shirts and things aren't aired. Damp as a fish. To-morrow I want you to put them all out in the sun."

"Very well," said Ammiral obediently. Their simple supper over, the two talked for an hour, without any sort of restraint. If this was largely due to the lady's outstanding charm, it must be fairly allowed that Ammiral's tinder was near as fine as her spark. If she struck the pretty fire, be sure he glowed: but he did not smoulder nor did he burst into flame. This to his infinite credit: to play such a game badly was the simplest thing in the world.

The man was gentle, scrupulous to a hair. His guest was, of course, as safe in his keeping as if she had lain in a hospice governed by nuns. What worried Ammiral was that he had care of her mind: this was as quick and clear as a mountain spring: that such a fount should be troubled was not to be thought of. The man knitted his brows. Chance had made him her partner in this preposterous figure of the Dance of Fate, and, if she was not to stumble, he would have to be nimble indeed. Had she been altogether a child, it would have been easy enough; but the girl was half-child, half-woman, and to follow her steps in a measure so rare and fantastic was requiring exceptional skill. Her present position was unheard of, had only to be coldly focussed to be found big with confusion—a very Caliban of abashment, to haunt her days. A glance, a careless word, even an awkward silence would instantly present this view, and that with a blunt directness which could neither be mistaken nor ignored. Ammiral set his teeth. The man was resolved that, when Tuesday had come and gone—and she with it—her outlook should be fresh and sweet-smelling as the breath which she drew. The simile pleased him for a moment. Then, with a frown, he wrenched his thoughts back into line. 'Eyes have they, but they see not . . .'

The girl was lovely as a flower, with a grave, delicate beauty that her eagerness lighted as a lamp: her mouth would have been disdainful, if gaiety had not made it its home. Looking upon her, Ammiral remembered the Iliad-Andromache, perhaps, but not the desolate captive: Andromache care-free, betrothed. That the man was passably handsome is not to the point and may be disputed. What is quite certain is that he was not an 'idol of the heathen, the work of men's hands ': he was an observant and healthy young bachelor, aged not quite twenty-nine, and of his five senses all were active and none were at all impaired. The lady regarded her wrist-watch.

"Half past ten," she murmured. "I suppose you won't let me carry the tray to the kitchen and bring myself some hot water, before I retire?"

"I will not," said Ammiral, rising.

"Oh, Terry, do you 'absolutely refuse'?"

"Roster," said Ammiral. The dog sprang to his side. "The maiden is mocking your master. What shall we do?"

"Roster," said Elaine mischievously. The dog bounded across. "Your mistress . . ."

Ammiral seized the tray and made himself scarce. . . .

To heat the water took him a quarter of an hour.

When he returned, half the tent was in darkness, and my lady had disappeared. In a corner, however, was a most excellent bed. Its linen was straight and smooth: its upper sheet and blanket were folded back: on a chair by its head lay a little pile of fresh linen from which he could take what he pleased.

For a moment the man stood staring.

Then he stepped to the bed.

One touch was enough: the bed had been made upon a mattress some two inches thick.

Ammiral cleared his throat.

"Look here, Elaine——"

A resolute voice cut him short.

"Sorry, my dear, but I—I—'absolutely refuse.' I'm sorry to have asked for the water, but I had to get you out of the way. And now I'm just falling asleep. And this bed doesn't need a mattress: I never was so comfortable before. And warm and everything. So please don't disturb me any more, and I hope you'll sleep very well. Good night, Terry."

Ammiral regarded the curtain helplessly.

At length--

"Good night, Elaine," he said.

Ten minutes later he was sleeping like the dead.

\* \* \* \*

Six hours had gone by, and the two were standing together at the top of the infamous pass, watching the splendour of the sunrise light up the majesty of earth. The scene was incomparable. Slowly mountains and valleys lifted their heads: gradually colour came stealing out of the grey of the dawn: the firmament was changing its raiment for one of blue and green, flecked here and there with crimson, slashed with gold: a magic overlay of dew confounded the sight.

"The coronation," breathed Elaine.

"Our kingdom is being crowned."

"That's right," said Ammiral, nodding. "And this you may see any day for nothing at all."

"Have you seen it often, Terry?"

"A good many times, Elaine. But it's always new."

The girl nodded gravely.

"I'll never forget it. Or how you showed it to me." She pointed a delicate finger. "I'd like to walk that way."

"And a very good way, too," said Ammiral.
"Come on, Roster. We can walk on the top of this ridge for nearly four miles."

"On this sort of going? How lovely. And with no one on earth to see us. When I ran away from the *château*, I never expected to fall on my feet like this."

"You're very easy to entertain," said

Ammiral.

"I'm not at all really," said the girl. "But you're very nice to me, and I like your ways. And, oh, I meant to tell you, I've got an idea. Don't you think that during the day we could open one side of the tent? The far side, I mean. Then I won't be shut up, but still I'll be out of view."

"I don't see why not," said Ammiral.
"I think we'd better shut it while I'm away getting supplies. That'll take me an hour and a half this afternoon. But the rest of

the time we can sit with one side open and take the air."

"We?" said Elaine. "I'm not going to keep you in. Because I must be a prisoner

"My dear," said Ammiral, "I've nothing on earth to do. If you weren't here, I should stay in camp during the day. I walk like this in the morning; but during the heat I read and write and generally potter around."

"Who do you write to, Terry?"

"The public. I try to write books."

"Oh, my dear, what about?"

"Anything I can think of," said Ammiral. "That's how I live."

Elaine stood perfectly still, finger to lip. "Ammiral," she said. "I knew that I knew the name. Didn't you—didn't you write *The Bow in the Cloud*?"

The man coloured with pleasure.

"That's quite right," he said. The girl caught her breath. "But I can't think how you remember: it hardly sold."

"Because I loved it," cried Elaine. "And

why on earth didn't it sell?"

"Because most people didn't love it.

But I'm so glad you did."

"I loved every word," said Elaine, catching his arm. "I can't get over it being you. Of course, that's why we're not strangers. Oh, Terry, I'm so glad to have found you. If you knew how I've read that book. I love the bit where the maiden helps the shepherd to write his love-letter and all the time it's going to go to her. How did you think of it all? Have you ever been in love?"

"Not that I know of," said Ammiral.

"That's right," said Elaine. "I don't want you to be in love. I like you to be as I found you—all alone with Roster, high up in the hills."

"I have to come down in the autumn.

I've a little house in London——"

"Like the one the maiden lived in, in Witchery Lane?"

"That's right," said Ammiral.

"With a forecourt and a sundial and a letter-box in the wall?"

"It has all those pretty things."

"Oh, Terry, my dear, to think that I know your home! Knew it and loved it long before I knew you. Are you sure you made up the maiden?"

"I give you my word," said Ammiral.

"I haven't even a sister."

Elaine regarded the heaven, now full of light.

"You described her very minutely."

"I tried to make her look nice."

"She was perfectly lovely," said Elaine.

"I wonder where you met her."

"I never met her," cried Ammiral. "I

tell you I made her up."

"So the shepherd kissed her," said Elaine, addressing the air. "'He'd never kissed anyone before, but he knew how it ought to be done. He never forgot his surprise at the feel of her lips: it was so refreshing and comfortable—just as though they had been made to be kissed, as, of course, they had.' And now I've left out some."

"You've a wonderful memory," said

Ammiral.

"Nothing to the shepherd's," said Elaine. Ammiral sighed.

"Have it your own way," he said. "I'm

a dissolute and profligate—"

"You're not, you're not! No one who was could have written so simply as that. Oh, Terry, I love to tease you. You take everything so gravely."

"I know," said Ammiral ruefully. "It's

a terrible fault, but——"

"It isn't. It's just your way. And I think I'm very good for you."

"I'm sure of that," said the man, and

meant what he said.

"It's like a dream," said Elaine. "You write the book and I love it, and then I run away blindly and stumble right into your arms. You were very stern that first night, weren't you?"

"I suppose I was, but something had to

be done.

"I shall never see why. I was an utter stranger, and, once you'd warned me, my blood was on my own head."

"Stranger, perhaps," said Ammiral. "But you were 'within my gates'. Besides, you—you—well, I didn't want your blood to be on your head."

Elaine tilted her chin.

"I don't see why you shouldn't say you liked the look of me. I mean, I think that's the truth. Of course you're quite right to be careful, but I like you so much that I'd like to know you like me."

The man's heart bounded within him. The world about him grew misty. Every nerve in his body was tingling, and the beauty that stepped at his elbow stung him like an

exquisite flame.

By a prodigious effort he steadied his

"I liked the look of you," he said. "And I'm very glad you like me, and I do like you very much."

With a maddening smile, the lady peered into the distance, shading her eyes.

"Well, that's something," she said. "But I can't help feeling that the shepherd would have—Oh, look at that baby village beside

Four golden days had gone by, and Miss Elaine Carey was twenty-one.



"'So I did,' bubbled Walt. 'I never see anyone so floored. An' the 'ole of the charrerbang laughin' fit to burst.'"

Nothing had happened to disturb the peace she had found or to put in peril her freedom from her step-mother's rule. If search had been made for her, no news of it reached the camp, and nothing had

appeared in the papers which Ammiral saw. Cars had gone by up the pass, as they always did, but none of them took the by-road, and none of them stopped. And that was as near as interference had



"A cool hand stole into Ammiral's-held it fast. As he strove to read its message-"

The two could not know that a car containing a doctor and the inelegant Georges had passed on Sunday morning about eleven o'clock, or that a smoothtongued widow had spent a fruitless Friday at Vernet-les-Bains. . . .

That Ammiral loved his guest there can be no manner of doubt. He had loved her, I think, as he plodded back to his camp that first afternoon, with her little shoes in his pocket and her parcels under his arm. Certainly the last three days had been punching a driven nail. He was mad about the lady, found her superlative, a daughter of the high gods. His best friends waited upon her: Nature was radiant whenever she was abroad: the silver trumpets of Romance sounded continually in his ears. The man saw and heard these things—and kept faith with himself.

"Boulogne?" said Elaine.
"Boulogne," said Ammiral, lighting a cigarette. "There we try for an emergency passport—a refusal won't matter now. And so to London. I know a solicitor there, who'll see you through. He'll know what ought to be done and how to do it. And his name at the foot of a letter will make the recipient think."

"Yes," said Elaine. "And then?"

"I shall bow and retire," said Ammiral. "He'll see you through. I must get back to Roster—we can't take him. I shall leave him at the farm in the valley where I get the milk. And they'll keep an eye on the camp."

"I see," said Elaine thoughtfully.

"We needn't leave here till the evening," continued Ammiral. "There's a train from rail-head for Paris that leaves about ten."

"Good," said his guest, rising. like to have one free day. When I've washed these things-"

"I'll bring you the water," said Ammiral. "My dear," cried Elaine, "don't forget that the danger is past. To-day I can see and be seen."

Ammiral got to his feet.

"Not as my "Not here," he said. guest. In the car, on the road, in the train: but not in this camp."

"Oh, Terry, what can it matter? Don't be so strict. Besides, it's a chance in a million. We can't be seen from the road."

"I don't care. It's a chance I won't take. You and I know why you are here,

A low growl from Roster snapped the sentence across.

For a moment the two stood listening.

"Into the bedroom," breathed Ammiral. As the girl slipped behind the curtain, he took his stand in the gap which led to the inner room. Then he leaned against one of the tent-poles casually enough.

"May I blow in?" said a voice.

Ammiral nodded to the Airedale, whose eyes were upon his face. Then-

"By all means," he said.

"What 'o," crowed the other. "I'd 've laid a till to a toothpick that you weren't French," and, with that, the genial intruder followed his Cockney accent into the tent. "Come on, Walt," he shouted, "here's an English gentleman wants you to 'ave a drink."

"Sit down," said Ammiral pleasantly,

nodding towards a chair.

"I don' mind if I do," said the other, sinking on to a seat. "An' many thanks. Tight little place you've made here, an' no mistake. Caravannin'?"

Ammiral shook his head.

"Just camping out," he said.

Walt appeared in the doorway—as fair a foil this fellow as could have been found.

Both were fat and of a cheerful countenance: both were exuding goodwill: both were suggesting an honest belief in beer. But, while Walt was plainly retiring, and a schoolboy shyness looked out of his jolly blue eyes, the other wore an air of familiar confidence which was not only manifestly invulnerable but positively disarming in its absolute assumption of reciprocal esteem.

"'Ope I don't intrude, sir," said Walt,

staring.

"Not at all," said Ammiral falsely. The position was absurd—ludicrous.

The devil was driving no longer: instead, Low Comedy was flaunting its borrowed plumes. Clown had stolen Harlequin's sword and was holding the flickering point to Ammiral's throat.

Hospitality had to be rendered.

In the brook, a hundred yards distant, were two or more bottles of beer. Yet how could he leave the tent? Walt and his friend were human—earthy of the good, red earth. The moment he was gone, they would surely explore his bedroom and discover Elaine. As if that were not enough, the débris upon the table was declaring a breakfast for two.

Ammiral could have stamped for vexation.

Till this morning he had been so careful,

tions against surprise. And now . . .

With a hazy, halting idea of gaining time, his host waved Walt to a chair and crossed his legs.

"Are you doing the Pyrenees?"

"That's right," said Walt's companion. "Beeritz to Karkersong. The charrerbang's down the road with a wheel in the ditch. An hour an' a 'alf it'll be before she's out. An' the sun on them cushions that 'ot you can burn your 'and. When I said we'd walk on to the pub, the driver laughed. 'Ad quite a game with us, didn' 'e, Walt ? "

"That's right, Tom," grinned the other. "Presently a French gent steps in. 'Next pub ten miles,' he says, 'oldin' up both of his 'ands.'' Walt began to shake with laughter. "I give you my word, Walt 'ere had to 'elp me away.''

"So I did," bubbled Walt. "I never see anyone so floored. An' the 'ole of the charrerbang laughin' fit to burst."

He wiped his eyes reminiscently.

A cool hand stole into Ammiral's—held it fast. As he strove to read its message—

"I—I see," he stammered desposately. "And—and then you saw my tent."

"That's right," said Tom. "Takin' a stroll we was-to try to forget. Then we come roun' the corner right on top o' this nest. The moment I see it I says 'That's an Englishman's pitch.' Everything clean an' shipshape, an' a nice, white-

Elaine appeared in the doorway, her hand

on Ammiral's arm.

"That's quite right," she said. husband's very particular. I'm American myself, but he's taught me any amount."

The two strangers were on their feet.

"Proud to meet you, m'lady," said Tom. "I 'ope we 'aven't disturbed you. It's early yet."

"I'm very glad to see you," said Elaine. "If I hadn't been finishing dressing, I'd have appeared before." She turned to Ammiral. "And now that I'm on parade, will you get some beer?" She returned to her new-found friends. "I'm sure you must be thirsty: and to walk ten miles in this sun is a shade too thick.'

"So it is, m'lady," said Tom heartily. Ammiral left the tent, like a man in a dream. . . .

Five minutes later he returned, to find my lady discoursing of Prohibition, with Tom and Walt hanging upon her lips. The Antoinette ring which glowed from her

had never relaxed for an instant his precau- wedding finger might have been there for

"And so, you see," she concluded, "it all comes of using the Law as it wasn't meant. to be used. If a man oversteps the mark, the Law's the thing to put him back in his place. But use the Law to monkey with human nature, and you'll buy a bag full of trouble and lose your match."

Tom raised his eyes to heaven and took

a deep breath.

"I'd like some of the black gloves in England to 'ear you talk," he said gratefully. "That's the stuff to give 'em, m'lady, ain't

it, Walt?"
"Every time," said Walt, nodding his

Ammiral poured the beer, cool from the brook ....

Half an hour later the strangers took their

"We shan't never forget this," said Tom, looking round the tent. "Entertained us like kings, you 'ave. I know I'm free, m'lady, an', when I see you in the doorway, I was frightened at what I'd done. An English gentleman's different—he knows a frien' when he sees one, an' don' care where he was born. But you . . ."
"That's right," said Walt

thickly.

"You."

Elaine smiled very charmingly.

"I'm so glad you won't forget us," she

". That's right," said Ammiral, shaking Walt by the hand. "My wife knows a friend when she sees one, as well as I."

Tom bowed over Elaine's fingers. Then he turned to his fellow with shining eyes.

"Guess we'll put it over that driver," he said. "Maybe the nex' pub's ten miles, but we've each of us 'ad a couple at the sign of The 'Eart of Gold."

Their host saw the two as far as the curling by-road. Then he returned to the tent.

Elaine was standing with her back to the entrance gap, holding off her little left hand and regarding the Antoinette ring with her head on one side.

As Ammiral hung on his heel—

"Don't be cross with me, Terry," she

Ammiral stepped to a chair and sat himself

"I can't be cross with you," he said. "For one thing, it wouldn't be fair, and, for another, I—I don't feel like it. But I'm wild with myself."

"For heaven's sake, why?"

"For being caught bending."

"Oh, Terry. And it was such fun. They were so nice and gentle, and they were so glad of that beer."

The man put his head in his hands.

"My dear, you avoid the point, which is that I've let you down. You saved the situation and you did it devilish well. But—well, Tom and Walt look healthy, and I daresay they'll live for years."

"What if they do? We'll never see them

again.'

"I hope to God we shan't," said Ammiral fervently. "But, when you inherit, I expect there'll be rather a shout. Pictures of you in the papers, and paragraphs. . . . And, when you're engaged and married, the same sort of thing. Well, that's all right, but what about Tom and Walt? I mean, I guess they can read."

Elaine leaned against the table and stared

at her shoes.

"Perhaps. But they'll hold their tongues. Our secret's quite safe with them."

Ammiral jumped to his feet.

"They haven't got our secret. And there's the rub. If they had, I wouldn't care. But it breaks my heart to think that they'll——"

Elaine's hands were on his shoulders and

her face was two inches from his.

"Terry, my dear, you leave out the redeeming feature—the thing that saves the game. Perhaps they'll know my picture, but they'll never forget your face. Or the look in your eyes. It's honest, you see. . . . And so, whatever they read, they'll know there's some good explanation of my being here."

The man put his hands behind him and

stared at the roof.

"Elaine," he said, "they were men. And so I doubt if they'd know me, if they met me a month from to-day. They were, I think, decent men, and I find it most hard to believe that, whatever they read, they'll think any harm of you. But the age is against us. And I'd give a year of my life for them to have passed us by."

There was a little silence.

Then-

"Look at me," said Elaine.

Ammiral lowered his eyes.

"If I'm compromised, so are you. I've posed as your wife."

Ammiral's finger-nails dug into his palms.

"To my lasting honour, Elaine," he said steadily.

"Why do you say that, Terry?"

The man looked away.

"I—I don't know. I suppose a man likes to be trusted by the—by a woman he likes. It—it serves his vanity."

"I see. Did I serve your vanity by

pretending to be your wife?"

Ammiral nodded. He dared not trust his voice.

"Not good enough," said Elaine. "Look in my eyes."

Ammiral met her gaze.

For a moment grey eyes held brown.

Then she drew down his head and kissed his lips.

The man's arms were about her, and her cheek against his.

" Elaine, Elaine."

"Say you love me, Terry. I know you do. I've seen the look in your eyes. But I want to hear you say it."

"I loved you that first day, my darling.

l-----'

"That's right. I knew you did. But I knew you would never say so and I didn't know what to do. And then Tom and Walt blew in and opened the door. Don't you think we might be married in Paris? As soon as we can?"

"But you don't really love me, Elaine.

I mean, you've only known me——'

"My dear, you're the shepherd. I've loved you for months and months. We've been engaged for ages. And then Fate stepped in and brought me 'within your gates'."

"My beautiful stranger," said Ammiral,

putting her hand to his lips.

"And will you take me home to Witchery Lane? I mean, it's my house really. What

are you laughing for ? "

"Because I can't fight any more. Force majeure can have it. I know when I'm beat. That night there was nothing to do but take you in: once you were in—well, if you went for a walk with a Trappist, I'll bet he'd be quoting Swinburne before you got back: then Tom and Walt fall from heaven clean into the basket of eggs I've been trying so hard to hatch: and now you bend against me The Bow in the Cloud"

Elaine threw her arms round his neck.

"Of course I do: I've the right. It wasn't a book."

"What was it then, my darling?"

"My love-letter," whispered a child, and hid her face.

# THE BRIGHT REVERSION

## By JOHN RUSSELL

⊙ ⊙ ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT ⊙ ⊙

T is curious that nobody should have warned Jennie May about her cousin before she found him there in Honolulu. Of course, a great singer like Jennie May—making her grand tour of the world—she was handled by her management and her entourage rather like a humming-bird's egg. They carried her along in a nest of cotton, so to speak. Nothing should ever be allowed to touch her in any way nearly.

But still it is singular that she had heard no definite word of Jimmie Wayver for years, up to the moment when he met her outside the Opera House. Jimmie owned a reputation that had blasted him up and down the South Seas. Rather like one of those things we used to set off on Fourth of July, called "nigger-chasers." Once started, they kept exploding at your heels wherever you chose to run.

He had touched off his own personal firework—poor devil—and between fantasy and irony in their South Sea manifestations it had scorched his poor heels between Nukahiva and the Pelews. In Honolulu itself he was a public institution—the only man who ever drank down the old Chink bartender at the Alex. Young Hotel. . . . And this was fame indeed, if you like!

The fact remains that when Jennie May landed that day in Hawaii she still held the image of Jimmie Wayver as she had known him years before.

Jennie May! You have heard her—you have sat enthralled under the spell of her golden voice and have seen the gates of some incredible, forgotten Paradise swing open to your dazed and dreaming senses!

How many ever knew her: the woman? Her face, like a vision of all sweetness and all wisdom—her resplendent calm—her glorious sweep of limb and body: her charm: this we knew and worshipped.

And mind you, as a "star," from a cold

business point of view she was generally very easy to manage—until she wanted something. Always docile, always kind and gentle and considerate and generous to a fault—until she happened to want something.

0

Lonely. A lonely heart, withdrawn, as I suppose all who own a supreme gift must be. Not in the least conscious of it, understand. Not in the least presuming or posing, as any second-rater will do. No. She was Jennie May. She dwelt by herself in the assured detachment of an Olympic goddess.

But when she wanted something! Whether it was a change in her company, or a new ordering of her rooms, or—as once happened—a pomegranate for breakfast: that thing must be. Otherwise, watch out for the walls and the ceiling. "Ye cataracts and hurricanoes!"...

They tell a story of her chief manager, Shenstone, who was seen on one occasion running around the deck like an ant on a hot stone, with his arms full of steamer

"Dammit—it's got to be green! Who has a green rug? Get me a green rug, somebody. Quick . . . quick!"

And afterwards, wiping his beaded brow, he said: "What a woman! Sometimes she frightens me. She's what they call the Absolutely Amoral Feminine! Fact. I believe if I hadn't found her that green rug she'd have had a knife into me—or else torn up her contract!" He shuddered.

However: our tale concerns Jimmie and Jennie.

She stepped out of her hired car in the side street by the Opera House that night to meet a select little group waiting to welcome her with compliments and flowers—both very expensive. I should say, selected group. Shenstone had attended to that: as it was his pride to do. You can be quite

sure that Shenstone had completely mastered the entire list of local eligibles with all their social quarterings: whether millionaires from the sugar or the missionary line.

But one person he had overlooked.

At the far edge of the crowd stood a man of rather diffident appearance. Slightly built, but with a distinct military touch about him: a handsome chap, with pallid, ascetic face and light moustache. Under the dim glow of the entrance he seemed entirely correct and fashionable in slimfitted dinner suit and white gleaming shirtfront. In one hand he held a little nosegay of exquisite island wild flowers. Those flowers shook a bit—the man himself must have been shaking.

From the auto step, pausing, Jennie May looked out over the reception committee. She was looking for one remembered face, and when she spied it she gave a cry. Scattering all the eligibles right and left, she came straight through in a rush.

"Jimmie!"... What a voice it was!

She took both his hands in hers.

"How are you, Jennie?" he answered, steadily enough. "I—I didn't know if you'd know me."

"Of course I did—of course I would, Jimmie." There was a tremulous brightness about this imperial woman. "I knew you lived here in Hawaii: I heard so last year. . . . And how I have been wanting to see you!"

They looked into each other's eyes—a long moment that held unfathomable things. Then Shenstone came blundering up. Before he could utter a word, Jennie May turned around on him:

"This is my cousin, Mr. James Wayver. See to it that he has the best box to-night.

At once, please . . . ! "

. . 14 ?

The manager could only bow, helplessly. And with a parting radiance for Jimmie, she swept on into the theatre, most rudely ignoring at least fourteen scions of local nobility and their wives, whose ancestors had made vast fortunes by robbing the simple Kanaka of his lands and were therefore naturally entitled to consideration.

Well: that was a night. A night often to be recalled—as it still is by those fortunate enough to have been present. People who know say that Jennie May never sang better in all her life.

. . . She sang for Jimmie Wayver.

Aye: did she. While the musical and social strata of our little island metropolis sat entranced and goggle-eyed, Jennie May

sang to a dim, slight, inconspicuous figure occupying all by itself the shadows of the right-hand stage box. A modest figure: perfectly conventional and precise, sitting there and holding a little bunch of flowers. But the hawk eye of scandal had picked him out and identified him at once, and between numbers the incredulous murmur ran:

"Look: it's Jimmie Wayver!... Look!"

But while she sang, nothing else mattered. You know, Jennie May's was never just singing. Something simply reached down inside and plucked the hidden soul of you and by incalculable magic moulded it at will: with pride; with grief; with yearning; with surrendered love of passionate dreams—and dismissed it back to you at last a reluctant prisoner in a shimmer of wings.

... Yes: and I have known some pretty tough and disreputable folk who saw wings when Jennie sang!... Never mind.

All this she did this night for Jimmie, alone.

Afterward? Amusing. The unhappy Shenstone had arranged one of his idiotic receptions where Jennie May was supposed to meet and smirk and chatter. He had all his celebrities in line. He came looking for the star. She was gone!... He ran out at last in the side street to find her mounting into her hired private auto in company with a lone figure. Hair on end, he started stammering after her.

Jennie May merely looked at him.

After all, Shenstone was a very able manager. He caught just one gleam from her: a flat, greenish flash like that in the eyes of a tigress. Pulled himself up short. All he said, politely, was: "Miss May, I only wanted to remind you that the steamer sails at seven to-morrow morning!"

Right there he earned every cent of his salary, whatever it was. Jennie May never answered. She slammed the door and her car shot away into the chequered citrine, bright and dark, of a moonlight night in Hawaii.

They rode for a long time in silence.

"You tell this boy—what's his name, Lorenzo? . . . You tell him where to drive, Jim."

Jimmie did, and they drove into the by-ways. It was of those nights when the moon hangs like a big bright melon and the little crisp waves of the lagoon are so many scattered slices along its velvet pathway. When the gentle wind presses against your check as a wanton



like. There was little left for Jimmie to

G G

testimony of many men who have loved

and many women who have hated her: they always said that Jennie May was as innocent and simple as a babe in a cradle. A curious thought. They used to laugh at her about it, either angry or envious, in the way of the world.

It was the swing of the car on the turn above Punahou that brought her into his arms. It needed some such compulsion to bring the gracious and utter abandonment of herself. She had no skill in these matters. But when his arms were about her she sighed and rested there. While they talked.

What did they talk of? Why, of the time when they had been schoolmates and sweethearts, back in the old home town. What else?

To any sophisticated listener it would have seemed too trivial to report.... "Remember when we walked home from Endeavour meeting and we ran into Buxton's bull-dog? And I was so frightened. And you were so brave, Jimmie!"

"No, I wasn't. Too scared to run. Too scared to be scared in front of you," blurted Jimmie.



"'Miss May,' he said, 'allow me to present you to Mrs. James Wayver!'"

"And afterward . . ." she murmured.
"I remember. You got a great big

these two were hastening, I like to think of their Island journey together that night.



"Her gaze simply blazed upon him-simply scorched him for an instant."

bectle flying in your eye. I—I kissed you, because it made you cry, Jennie!"

"Yes. I b-bub-believe I'm crying now!" So she was. And so was he—tears of a priceless emotion. Because, you know, for the time Jimmie Wayver was as innocent and simple as herself: and being what they had been apart, with the abyss of the years between them, they might have lived for such a moment.

Life in our Islands is always fantastic and ironic. Because I know the gesture to which

Consider it. Here was this soiled and battered remnant of public scorn which was Jimmie Wayver—and here this immaculate, heaven-touched genius which was the incomparable Jennie May: riding under our soft Southern stars embraced in a perfect illusion! Emperors could have envied Jimmie Wayver. What am I saying? So could any man: so I do myself!

They rode all about. Up to Punch Bowl, whence they saw the whole world as a sweep of clouded peaks and silvered sea. Out

under Diamond Head, where they stayed for a while and let the breezes whip past them from China-way. Beside the glittering beaches of Waikiki, and up through Nuuanu, and the little valley of Waolani—the old-time wilderness home of the gods that rings now in these civilised days to golf clubs instead of war clubs.

It must have been about the time they were turning back, with the cooler breath of the morning in his face, that Jimmie began to revive. He made some comment about the clearing stars, and how he should always think of her when he looked up at them from his obscure Island roost—haltingly—the kind of thing a man would say.

Said Jennie May, quietly: "But that's all over, Jimmie. . . . You're coming on

with me."

He blinked.

"How do you mean-coming on?"

"Why, this morning.... On the ship!"

She sensed his start and looked around at him from his shoulder. "Of course. Do you think for one instant I'm going to let you go—ever—again? You are part of me, and I am part of you. . . . As it was, and shall be!" The tone was as sweet and assured as that of an organ pipe.

Jimmie Wayver woke up. The wonder and the beauty of this night so far they had shared: but the amazing implications of the gift she offered—how could she even guess? He tried to tell her.

"You don't know what I've done," he

stammered.

"I don't care what you've done," said Jennie May.

Jimmie was a chap not much given to laughter. But suddenly he laughed. Then he stopped short and, labouredly, he tried again. Doing his best, as they coasted down into the dawn. Doing his very best, gently, in clipped phrases, speaking as he might have spoken to a child, to give her some notion of the person he had become—

And when he was all through:

"What difference does it make?" said Jennie May.

"But even if it could be—it can't. . . . You don't understand!"

"I understand all I need to," she answered, serenely. "Between us—between you and me, Jimmie—there is nothing. . . . Do you understand me? Nothing!"

She had faced around to him, touching him—all her gracious and imperious presence, all her alluring and indomitable force projected upon him. Not boldly: but not in the least timidly. Fearless. For this was Jennie May.

In her palm had fallen from the posy he had brought her a little wild flower. It was still fresh. "See! These blossoms, they are content to be: lovely and expanding in their season as God meant them to be—until they wither and die. What else matters to them? What else should matter to us?... We knew each other—we grew together. We have found each other!"

Her eyes were wet: her hand closed on his.

"Oh, my dear—my dear—how could anything matter! Money? I have all we shall ever need. Suppose every conceivable objection the world could make. I don't care!"

She said it gloriously, and she meant it—so far as she could conceive what she meant herself.

"It's impossible—!" he gasped.

She smiled upon him—placid and confident as the smile that was even then tinting the sky.

"You can't help yourself, Jim. I want you.... How can you speak of possibilities—aren't we both here? Jimmie—Jimmie ... Jimmie!"

What a voice! What a woman . . .! And actually, it was entirely possible, you know. She was quite right—as Jimmie knew quite well. Actually, there was no positive reason why Jimmie Wayver should not go on with Jennie May. Anything she wanted on this earth had all the authority of divine rescript. No social quibbles could touch Jennie May. . . . Meanwhile the dawn had come. The steamer lay waiting.

Possible? It must have seemed inevitable—preordained. Talk about a cup of water in the desert, or a spar for a drowning sailor! To a man in Jimmie's position, there could have opened no more miraculous escape. Think what it meant. The whole round world laid wide to him again—the poor devil who had spurned and lost it. Think what it meant to him—the failure and outcast. Another chance, if only for a new departure and a new adventure. And such an adventure—with the savour of life keen and delicious on his lips . . .!

I cannot say just how distinctly Jimmie thought of these matters—such a problem would be largely pathological. But he certainly thought of them. He was still thinking as Jennie May sank back at ease.

"Tell Lorenzo-if you will, dear," she drawled sweetly. "Just tell him we had better return to the docks now. You can direct him which way."

Jimmie regarded her for a moment another long, unfathomable moment. Then suddenly he laughed again, for the second time that night. And then he did something which I consider pretty average heroic. He leaned forward and spoke to Lorenzo. . . .

Their car wound down seaward and into the outskirts of the old-town suburbs. In a rutted lane massed with bright pepper vines and flared hibiscus, it stopped before a sagging gate that gave entrance to a tiny, low-thatched hut behind. With more or less dignity, Jimmie Wayver managed to extricate himself and dismount.

"Maria!" he called loudly toward the hut. "O-hay! . . . Maria!"

A cheerful shout responded.

"O-hay, Jimmie! . . . What you want---- ? "

In the auto, Jennie May sat slowly upright. Her cheeks began to flush a little, her eyes to flicker with the flat, greenish light like that in the pupils of a tigress. She must have had some intuitive hint of what was coming—though not all of it of course, not its full impact. . . . Meanwhile Jimmie stood there. Quite reasonably sober, for Jimmie.

The first glow of the morning showed him off pitilessly: still handsome, with haunted, ascetic face and his trace of military bearing —but somewhat rumpled by his ride and now revealed in all his poor shams. His suit was rusty and ragged and spotted—a scrap of old torn crape was all his tie. His white gleaming shirt-front had come loose, most sadly displaying itself as the top cut out of a cardboard box. And alas, a paper cuff dropped off his wrist and left him, as you might say, stripped!

"Step out here a minute, Maria."

"Shu-ah! Lazy, good - for - nothing amiable answer. loafer!" came the "Wait: I come . . . Talofa!"

With which came Maria herself.

Who? Why, Maria—the big, buxom, bouncing laundress who used to wash our ducks and mend our socks with such ineffable shiftlessness and good nature. Maria: two hundred and fifty pounds of full-blooded Polynesian carelessness and generosity and humour. She had just been taking her bath in the verandah with a splashing cocoanut ladle, and now appeared in ample form with a sheet thrown anyhow about herthrusting through the vines—her copperbrown grin and tangled locks still dripping.

"Talofa!" greeted Maria.

Jimmie had drawn himself up. He bowed to the two ladies, first one and then the other. He did it with perfect politeness. For, you see, if they had both undergone an experience that night—if Jennie May had reverted somewhat toward the primitive, Jimmie Wayver had sustained a reversion of his own. . . . He was by way of being a gentleman now.

"Miss May," he said, "allow me to present you to Mrs. James Wayver!"

The only thing—probably—the single, imaginable, conceivable thing that could have stopped her. Anything else, and look out for the walls and the scenery. "Ye cataracts and hurricanoes!" Anything but

As it was, her gaze simply blazed upon him—simply scorched him for an instant. She slammed the door of the car with a crash like a pistol-shot. "Drive on, Lorenzo!" said Jennie May.

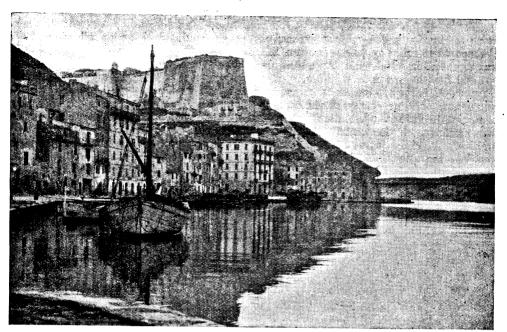
Jimmie stayed motionless for a time, looking after her. In one hand he still held a little bunch of wild flowers—faded now. That hand must have been shaking. I know it was when he dropped the posy and wiped his forehead in identically the same gesture the able Shenstone used to employ, after his times of temperamental torment. I know it was, because so it always did when Jimmie told the story afterwards.

Presently he turned to the grinning, fat dryad among the vines. "It's all right, Maria," he said curtly. "Tell your husband I shan't need him this morning. . . . I can get home to bed by myself!'





THE OLD PORT OF BASTIA.



THE OLD FORT AND THE NEW TOWN OF BONIFACIO.

The fort is famous for having withstood the siege by the forces of Alphonse d'Aragon in the fifteenth century.

## • CORSICA •

# A GEM OF THE MEDITERRANEAN By MAJOR A. RADCLYFFE DUGMORE

With photographs by the Author.

ANDITS, Vendetta; those two unpleasant words sum up, very briefly, the ordinary person's idea of Corsica. How or why the unfortunate island should have been burdened by such evil associations it is difficult to discover; for certainly nothing even dimly connected with either form of terror is ever seen by those who have the good fortune to visit the little gem of the Mediterranean except, perhaps, the sad reminders in the shape of crosses which may be seen on the roadsides marking the places where victims of feuds have met their end.

The last well-known bandit, Romanetti,

called the "King of the Bandits," was shot last year and was given a magnificent funeral, being followed through the streets of Ajaccio by thousands of the townsmen and people of the surrounding country.

Bandit is a word which should seldom have been used in connection with those men who "took to the maquis" to avoid being caught. In the majority of cases the men were primitive-minded and simply took the law into their own hands when they had, or fancied they had, a grievance. They settled the matter in a way that left no room for further argument and was cheaper than

going to law, for bullets are not expensive. Perhaps their crime of taking human life was repeated, in self-defence. An adventurous and foolish gendarme, thinking to gain glory, would follow the outlaw to his mountain home, or some enemy of the hunted man might seek to avenge himself by giving information as to the whereabouts of the fugitive. In either case another funeral would be the result. Corsican bandits sel-

A STREET IN THE OLD PART OF AJACCIO.

dom have been guilty of robbery, and certainly not in recent times. Outlaws, therefore, would be a better name to apply to them.

The Vendetta is a different thing, and at one time threatened the very existence of the people. It came about as a result of Genoese misrule, during the centuries when the Republic, by conquest and intrigue, thought it owned the island, body and soul. Justice was so rare in the courts that the

people gradually gave up all attempt to settle disputes in a lawful manner. They settled the case for the moment by death to whichever was the second quickest to shoot; but this was not the end, rather was it but the beginning. A feud, or *Vendetta*, was started between the families of the two parties, and then by their friends, until whole communities became involved and the toll of life became as an endless chain.

During two centuries, three-quarters of a million people were computed to have been killed as the result of the *Vendetta*. Its existence prevented the islanders presenting a united front in the efforts which were continually being made to eject the Genoese from their land and to rule the country themselves.

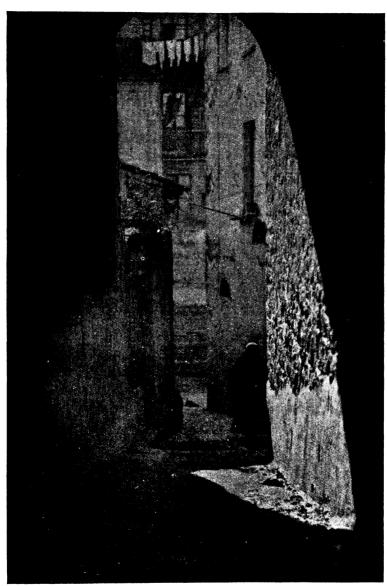
When Pasquale Paoli took hold of the reins of government in 1755, at the time that a serious effort was being made to get rid of Genoese rule, his first act was to suppress the Vendettaby the most drastic means. So much did he accomplish that since that time it has played but a very small part in the life of the people, and to-day it is scarcely mentioned except, of course, by tourists who lose no time in making inquiries about both bandits and Vendetta. Surely there is something pleasanter to think and talk about in an island whose beauty is everywhere; turn which way you will there is a feast for

the eye. Around the shores the sparkling Mediterranean gleaming in the sunshine—for in this country the sun does shine, even in winter—shows itself in colours infinitely rich and varied, from brilliant emerald green to deep blues and wonderful purples, which lap gently against the broad sandy beaches, or curl like rainbows among the red porphyry and granite rock, or beat themselves, should the wind be blowing, against the mighty cliffs which are worn and weathered by the

CORSICA.

force of the waters' constant surging. Away from the shores are hills covered with maquis, so sweet-scented by its many aromatic plants and shrubs that to drive or walk through it and breathe the perfume is to realise why Corsica has been named the

flower stem rises, perhaps fifteen feet or more, from the plant and throws out its strange flowers. Olive trees of silvery grey, ilex and cork trees and eucalyptus and firs, too, clothe the hill-slopes in suitable places. Gardens, usually terraced, are dotted about



ONE OF THE MANY PICTURESQUE ARCHWAYS IN AJACCIO.

"Scented Isle." Strange-shaped cactus, laden with its superabundant mass of pink and yellow, spine-protected fruit, which we call prickly pears, long-leaved aloes, or agave, with their almost steel-hard points, and here and there, like giant asparagus, the

here and there, and we see the dark green orange trees spotted with bright golden fruit; now and then a group of date-palms give a touch of Africa and remind one of the tropics. Beyond, are more hills, rising ever higher and higher until snow-capped peaks, seven, eight, or even nine thousand feet high, show clear and white against the deep blue of the sky.

Why then speak of bandits when the land is so full of things to see and enjoy? Let us take just a glimpse at some of the best that the island has to offer. We will motor and so get there more quickly. The roads as a rule are good, except near the larger towns, where the heavy traffic cuts them up faster than contracts for their repair can be made in this land of no-hurry.

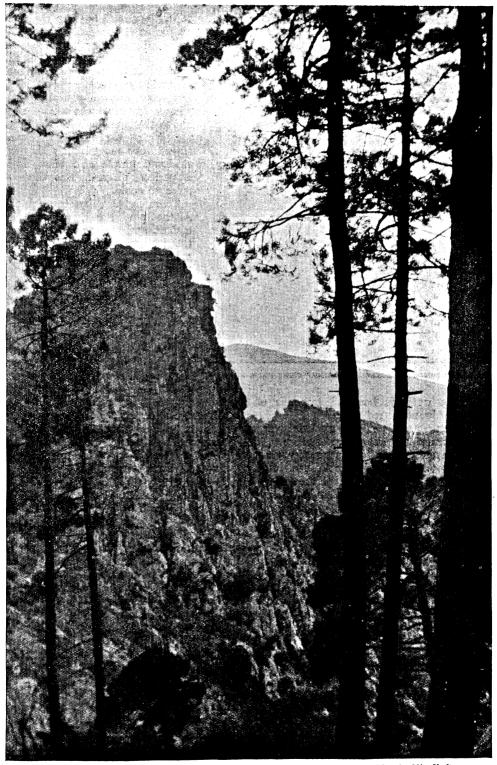
It is a strange place, a place where Nature appears to have been in a playful mood one moment and sardonic the next, for she took it into her head, with the aid of such tools as the wind and the rain, to fashion the red rocks into many and various fantastic forms. Men and beasts and things, neither the one nor the other, merely creatures of stone, made life-like by strange shapes, of weird things that smile or grin, sneer or frown at the passer-by, ready apparently to pounce down without warning—truly a unique col-



THE VALLEY OF THE SPELUNCA NEAR EVISA.

The best known place for the sightseer is the Calanche, about seventy-three kilometres north of Ajaccio, over a good road which, though interesting, has no remarkable features. The highest point is but thirteen hundred feet or so; part of the way is over maquis-covered hills, part through cultivated land, where the grape vine, olive and corn are grown, then skirting the sea round the bay of Sagone, through the old Greek settlement, Cargese, begun in 1676 and now, after various vicissitudes, almost completely Corsican, to the little village of Piana, and then at last to the Red Rocks of the Calanche,

lection of monsters and dwarfs. Far up on the mountains, which rise four thousand feet high, the strange forms begin, and downward, on spur and slope, into deep ravines they are still there, as though interrupted in their journey to the green and purple water far below; and yet, in spite of the grotesque forms, the jagged rock-clad slopes are beautiful in their own peculiar way, especially when the sun is low and the shadows long and mysterious, for then the masses of orange and purple, the light and the shade, form a wonderful background to the wonderful gulf of Porto, whose green



[Photo by Miss II. Duymore.

A GORGE IN THE FAMOUS CALANCHE.



THE MOST PICTURESQUE PLACE ON THE CAP CORSE ROAD, NONZA.

and blue water is bordered by cliffs of strangely beautiful red rocks.

The Calanche is like a gigantic stage set for some Titanesque performance. It appeals even more to the imagination than it does to the sense of pure beauty. But continue along the road through the strange rocks and soon the scene changes to one of extraordinary beauty and grandeur. few kilometres passed and Porto unfolds itself, a tiny village, hidden almost by tall eucalyptus trees, at the mouth of the Porto River and guarded by an ancient Genoese tower which stands out in the bay. turn inland and go up through the Spelunca gorge. What a glorious drive it is! winding round the spurs of the great mountains, whose rocky summits are so wonderfully coloured in orange, rose, grey and green, and whose bases are richly clothed with the sweet-scented maquis; up you go to the little village of Evisa. In twenty-eight kilometres you have gone from sea-level to a height of over two thousand six hundred feet, and you find yourself surrounded by mountains several thousand feet higher, and all wonderful in colour and varied in form, round-topped and pinnacled, rocky and forest-clothed, bare and snow-covered; words cannot describe the beauty of it all.

If it happens to be near the hour of sunset the scene is a veritable fairyland; clinging to the steep slopes of the rocky hill is the quaint little village with its irregular buildings, crooked red and yellow roofs, and well-placed church, whose graceful campanile rises above the blue smoke of the evening fires; beyond it the suntipped rosy mountains with their shadows, purple and blue. It is a perfect picture. But there is more to come.

There is the drive through the Aïtone pine forest, eleven kilometres, and a rise of another two thousand two hundred feet, along a perfect road, and you reach the highest piece of road in Corsica, the Col de Vergio, four thousand eight hundred feet high. It is a wind-swept spot, as the torn and twisted beech and pine trees show. Looking back to the west, there is the gorge of the Aïtone and Porto Rivers, with the bay in the distance and the red mountains back of the Calanche on the one side, and the

Spelunca on the other. To the east there is the Golo River gorge, whose sides are pine forests and whose guardians are great rocky mountains. Monte Cinto, nine thousand feet high, with its snow-capped summit, is but twelve kilometres away to the north-east.

Space is limited, so we must leave this region of mighty mountains and make hasty journeys to other favoured places. A twohours' run from Ajaccio will take us up the Prunelli valley and ravine, through magnificent mountain scenery, to the little town of Bastelica, where the famous Corsican patriot. Sampiero, was born under the shadow of Monte Renoso, which is seven thousand eight hundred and sixty feet high. In the village is a fine statue to the man who, during the sixteenth century, fought with such valour against the Genoese and paid for his bravery with his life, for the Genoese, failing to conquer the great leader by fair means, caused him to be assassinated on January the 17th, 1567.

Then there is the Col de Bavella, about one hundred and six kilometres south-east of Ajaccio, perhaps the most perfect natural picture in the island. The Col is about three thousand eight hundred feet in height. The Mediterranean is visible both to the east and west, framed by mountains, beautiful both

in form and colour, for again we have the rosy orange rock, beyond a foreground of giant flat-topped pines, pruned by the winds into strangely decorative forms. Nature appears to have used every effort to produce a masterpiece and to have succeeded most wonderfully.

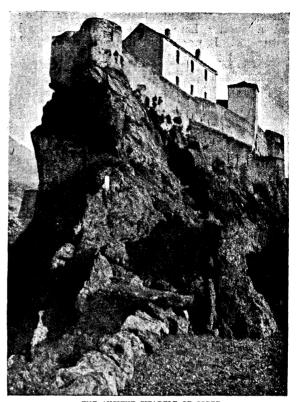
Besides these purely natural beauties, which are to be found all over Corsica, there are, throughout the island, places which combine picturesqueness with historical interest. For some reason Bonifacio seems to have captured the imagination of a large proportion of the visitors, even though they know little or nothing of its history. Perhaps it is the name, or that so many have passed through the Straits on their way to and from the Far East, and south. As a matter of fact, the Bonifacio of to-day is a rather sad place. has a population of under three thousand, its shops are small and depressing, and the whole place lacks animation, though its people are kindly and hard-working.

& The old town, on the weatherworn white cliffs, is enclosed in a fort which is entered by two ancient drawbridges. The restricted

area available for building has resulted in tall buildings and extremely narrow streets, steep and dark and picturesque, with curious arches keeping the houses apart. Among the churches is one built by the Knights Templar in the thirteenth century. Outside the old town is the new part built on the

harbour quay.

The town was founded in 828 by Boniface, Marquis of Tuscany, on his return from an expedition against the Saracens. In 1187, the Genoese captured it, and throughout its history the place remained faithful to the Republic and was, in fact, during part of its history, a small republic, under the protection of Genoa. The great feature in its history was the famous siege by Alfonso of Aragon in 1420, when, with some eighty ships, he attempted to capture the fortified town. For nearly five months the town defended itself against almost overwhelming odds with the most remarkable bravery, and without assistance from the neglectful Genoa until the last moment, when she sent ships. The story of the siege, too long to give here, is an epic, and the memory of it remains, for

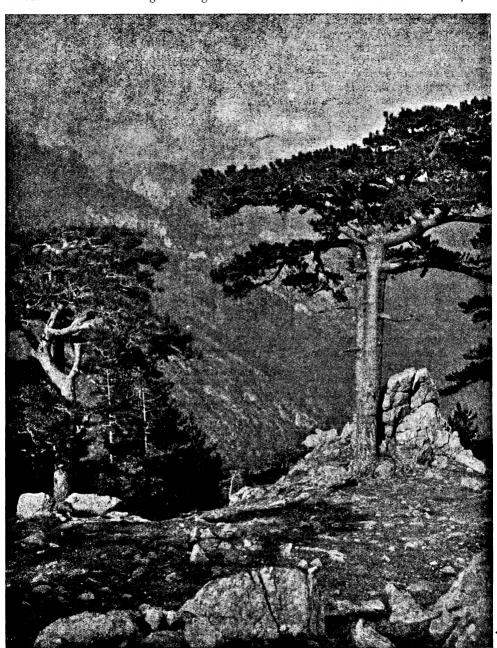


THE ANCIENT CITADELE OF CORTE.

It was in this inland town that Corsica was proclaimed a part of the British Empire by Paoli.

the present-day Bonifacians, their proudest possession.

Coupled with the name of Bonifacio is that of the thirteenth-century fortified town of Calvi, on the north-west corner of the island: these two forts were the only ones that remained faithful to Genoa throughout her long period of attempted rule and possession, and Calvi, by its fidelity, won the title of "Civitas Calvi semper fidelis," and the inscription still remains, carved on the stone above the entrance to the fort; notwithstanding the fact that it fell finally before the British attack on August 10th, 1794, after a siege which lasted about a month, under the command of General Charles Stuart and Admiral Lord Hood. defence was conducted by General Casabianca (at this period France had bought Corsica from Genoa, so that it was against France that our forces were fighting), who requested in the terms of capitulation that the inscription over the gate should not be destroyed. During the siege, Calvi was reduced to ruin by the heavy shelling, and to this day many of the buildings still remain a broken mass of masonry, though a century and a quarter have passed since their destruction. It was during this siege that the ruins of a house is an inscription on a marble plaque, stating that the discoverer of the New World was born there in 1441, when



THE COL DE BAVELLA, 1,240 METRES ABOVE SEA-LEVEL.

The most beautiful view in Corsica.

Nelson lost his eye, from a splinter of stone which had been struck by a round shot. Calvi also claims the distinction of being the birthplace of Christopher Columbus, and on

Calvi was under the Genoese rule. Proof of this fact seems to be not conclusive. So in the meantime both Genoa and Calvi claim the honour, and the Corsican town, if it really believes its story, shows a conspicuous lack of civic spirit in not having the ruins of the house protected against complete destruction.

Another town which combines history with picturesqueness is the inland stronghold of Corte, which is on the railway, about half-way between Ajaccio and Bastia. In appearance Corte can claim to be the strangest town in Corsica. It is built on a steep hill which rises like an island from the undulating valley, and is surrounded on three sides by the Tavignano and Restonica rivers. On the abrupt summit of rock, on the east side of which the town is built, there is a strange fort whose towers, perched high, overhang the cliffs as though daring anyone to come near them. The accompanying photograph shows what a strange effect is produced by this fort, whose age is not definitely known. In the eleventh century Corte existed as a fortified place, but whether the present fort was built then is very doubtful; it is more likely that the Genoese, when they conquered the island in 1419, were responsible for it.

Throughout all the centuries of turmoil which cursed Corsica, Corte was always regarded as the most important inland position, and consequently saw more fighting than any other place, except possibly the three principal coastal forts of Bonifacio, Calvi and Bastia. The names of some of the most notable Corsican leaders and generals, such as Sampiero, Vincentello d'Istria, Giaffari, Gaffori, Hyacinth and Pasquale Paoli, were intimately associated with the place, and many are the deeds of heroism and treachery that were performed there, as the inscriptions on some of the statues bear witness.

To us, one of the most interesting features

of the history of the place was the proclamation, at Corte, of Corsica as a part of the British Empire, by Sir Gilbert Elliot, on June 19th, 1794. It may be wondered what we were doing in the island, or whether we had "grabbed" it after the manner that some people imagine we do whenever a place seems desirable.

Briefly, the situation was this: Pasquale Paoli had fallen foul of the French, who had bought the island from Genoa, and he was determined to get rid of the French. Unable to do this without help from outside, he appealed to England. At that time we possessed no port in the Mediterranean east of Gibraltar. The idea of occupying Corsica with its many good harbours seemed therefore very sound. We accordingly accepted Paoli's invitation to take over the government of the island, and after capturing Bastia, St. Florent and Calvi, and by this means driving out the French, we took possession, and Sir Gilbert Elliot was appointed viceroy. What Paoli's sentiments were is shown by his speech delivered at Corte: "Enfin, ma chère petite patrie a trouvé une refuge permanent dans le cœur du roi d'Angleterre! Enfin nous avons échappé aux cannibales de la convention! L'avenir est à nous!" Unfortunately the future was not in their hands, for, on October 20th, 1796, we abandoned the islanders, after promising to protect them, and from then onward Corsica has been a part of France, whose greatest general, Napoleon Bonaparte, was born in Ajaccio, the capital of Corsica, of Corsican parents. To-day the island is living in peace. Let us hope its long centuries of struggle and misery have ended. Its only invaders now are the tourists, who find so much to enjoy in this gem of the Mediterranean.

#### THE GULLS.

WHERE the breakers fret the bar,
White against the springtide blue,
On the headlands near and far,
In the green cliff-hollows too,
Clash the gulls in airy strife.
The world sparkles into life.

For the shrill east harries not Seascape now or lovely land. Winter is a gloom forgot
On the wave and on the sand. Life, rekindling bird and tree,
Come, renew thyself in me!
ERIC CHILMAN.



"He opened the glass case awkwardly and slowly, took out the boots, wrapped them in a torn piece of dirty white paper and handed them over to Mabel Ellen."

## THE BLUE BOOTS

## By ROSE FYLEMAN

#### ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

HEY certainly were beautiful boots.

Blue satin, with white fur round the top, and laced up with silver laces terminating in delicious little silver tassels.

They were embroidered, too, with delicate sprays of pink flowers with silver leaves, embellished here and there with a tiny gold spangle, and the heels of them were of a most engagingly absurd and elegant height and slenderness.

Mabel Ellen used to wonder whether they had been made for a princess. They had that sort of look about them—something romantic, fairy-like.

They were not in the least like the smart dancing-shoes in the windows of the big shoeshops on the main streets.

Those were pretty enough in their way, but not like this.

They stood in a glass case, together with several other things—a slightly damaged ivory fan, a Dresden china shepherdess with a palpably mended neck, and a set of carved chessmen—in the window of a dingy little second-hand shop in a small side street about ten minutes' walk from the boarding-house where Mabel Ellen laboured diligently from

morning till night for the modest wage of twenty pounds a year.

Mabel Ellen had been just a year at Maddison House Select Boarding Establishment, as it was magniloquently called in the prospectus, when she discovered the boots.

It was a mildish morning in early February. Miss Bitherage had sent her out to buy a glass water-bottle for a new boarder's washstand.

The boots caught her eye as she was hurrying back home from the little china-shop ("And mind you don't pay a penny more than one-and-three," Miss Bitherage had adjured her), her purchase, untidily wrapped up in a bit of newspaper, clutched in her thin little red hand.

She had no time to linger, but it is astonishing how few seconds suffice for the conquests of beauty.

One glance at the blue boots, and Mabel Ellen had lost her heart to them utterly and for ever.

She came back the next day to look at them, and often and often again. They seemed to draw her as with a kind of charmed spell. She even went so far one day as to venture into the dusty shop and ask the price of them.

"Ten-and-six," said the frowsy, mumbling old man behind the counter. "Ten-and-six, and dirt-cheap at the price. Them's no ordinary boots, them ain't. Shall I get 'em out of the winder?"

But Mabel Ellen shook her head. "I'm afraid I can't afford them just now," she said, and went sadly out of the shop.

Ten-and-six. . . . She might have known that they could never be hers.

But the thought of them, there in their glass case, so exquisitely dainty and elegant, remained constantly in her mind, and was even a sort of comfort to her when things at the boarding-house were more difficult than usual.

She hugged the remembrance of them to her heart, deliberately turning her mind from the depressing atmosphere of her daily drudgery in order to dwell upon their alien loveliness. For Mabel Ellen's life at Maddison House was a hard one. Miss Bitherage was not a specially unfavourable specimen of the boarding-house-keeper class, but the occupation is one which does not tend to the preservation or development of the more delicate graces of the human mind and heart. And Mabel Ellen was of a strangely sensitive and susceptible temperament.

Whence it came I know not.

She was born in Bermondsey, where her mother drudged out "laborious days," struggling, with a courage which had more than a touch of the heroic in it, under the burden of a very frequently drunken husband and six children, whose gradual progress towards the wage-earning age seemed incredibly slow and hungry. Mabel Ellen had been her mother's right hand from childhood; at twelve she was as capable of doing the work of a household as many a fullgrown woman. When she was just fifteen, a neighbour's wife, whose daughter was in service and was leaving her job in order to better herself, suggested that Mabel Ellen might apply for it.

Doris, the next girl, was by now of an age to be useful to her mother, and that was how it came to pass that an outwardly composed but inwardly shaken Mabel Ellen arrived one evening with a small brown tin trunk and a large brown-paper parcel to take up her duties as "tweeny" at Maddison House,

Maddington Road.

There were eight boarders, "when we have our full complement," Miss Bitherage used to say, and the staff of the establish-

ment consisted of Mrs. Wilson, the cook, stout, elderly and of a coarse and rather choleric disposition; Mrs. Podson, who came on weekdays from eight to six and on Sundays not at all, and was mainly occupied with washing up and scrubbing; a small, pallid, fattish Italian of the name of Cæsar. who blacked the boots, opened the door, cleaned the knives and waited at table, and slept in a dark room in the basement, whither he invariably repaired after nine o'clock in the evening, not appearing until the next morning, and occupying himself meanwhile with Heaven only knows what strange and solitary pursuits; and Mabel Ellen herself, whose duties were far too varied for me even to attempt to enumerate

She struggled along as best she could, uncomplaining and unobtrusive. She was such a quiet, colourless, mouselike little slip of a creature, people hardly even looked at her.

If they had, they might have noticed a certain delicate charm in the little oval face, with its sensitive mouth and wide, childish brown eyes.

They might even have gone so far as to wonder what thoughts and dreams, going on behind those same brown eyes, gave Mabel Ellen her odd look of faintly abstracted intensity. Miss Bitherage had noticed it.

"Not a bad little thing," she used to say, but a bit . . ." and she would touch her

forehead significantly.

Cook, when she had had a little more of her beloved gin and bitters than usual, was not above a little coarse banter at Mabel Ellen's expense.

"Dreamin' of a young man as is goin' to come and fetch 'er away in a kerridge and

pair, she is," she would say.

Or, "She's too quiet by 'arf, that young Mabel Ellen! 'Tain't natural. I reckon she's too genteel for the likes of us. Ought to be a lidy, she ought, with her books and all."

This latter gibe was due to the fact that Mabel Ellen had a passion for reading, a passion which she could indulge but rarely. There was little time during the day for reading at Maddison House, and at night she slept in a tiny room which was really no more than a large cupboard, lighted by day only by an inside window which gave on to a landing, and at night by a single candle, the candles being strictly rationed. Certainly there was not much to do in the house after nine o'clock at night, but, excepting on Mrs.

Wilson's weekly evening out, the kitchen atmosphere was not conducive to that kind of occupation. The fat cook required a good many small services on her own account, and in any case kept up a continual flow of reminiscent small-talk from the wooden easy chair at the side of the hearth.

The boarders at Maddison House were of the mixed, lower middle-class, mainly nonpermanent type usually to be found in that

district.

Always excepting Miss Pauline Tootle.

At the time I am writing of, Miss Tootle had been there for some three or four years.

She was a dashing, buxom creature between forty and fifty, with elaborately dressed hair, rather suspiciously coppery at the ends, and, towards the end of the month, still more suspiciously greyish at the roots. She was the only boarder who had a sittingroom as well as a bedroom. Her father was reported to have been a butcher and to have left her a small income of £400 a year or so.

Be that as it may, she dwelt little upon the paternal side of the family, but was wont to expatiate at some length on the high social

standing of her mother's relations.

"My mother was a Neville," she used to say to new boarders, with *empressement*, "one of the Suffolk Nevilles, you know."

There was also a nebulous uncle who was reported, a little vaguely, to have gone "to the Colonies," and to have made, or to be making, a fortune in those parts; but how did not transpire.

Miss Tootle's Uncle James was something of a byword among the other boarders.

Miss Tootle herself, being of a romantic and hopeful disposition, was known to cherish expectations of an ultimate fortune.

"Some day," she would say mysteriously, some day I shall be driving a motor-car

of my own, perhaps."

"I suppose you won't know us then, Miss Tootle," the young man from a book-shop, who sat next to her at table and was always pleasant, if sometimes a trifle absentminded, would reply.

"Oh, Mr. Brown, what things you do say!" would be the coy rejoinder, and Mr. Brown would lapse again into his customary

silence.

Mr. Brown had a tiny room on the top

floor at the back of the house.

Mabel Ellen liked dusting that room. There were so many books in it. She didn't often get a chance of looking at more than the outside of them, because dusting the bedrooms was a task which had to be got through as quickly as possible, especially in the case of the small, cheap rooms on the top floors.

Once, Mr. Brown, coming back unexpectedly one Sunday morning after starting forth on his regular weekly country tramp, came upon her so completely absorbed in one of his books that she never heard him come up the stairs.

She flushed guiltily when he spoke to her and laid down the volume hurriedly and

went out.

Mr. Brown had the curiosity to pick it up. He was dumbfounded to find that it was a book of Henley's poems.

"Funny stuff for a skivvy to be reading," he said to himself as he went down the stairs again. "Wonder what on earth she made of it."

Up till then he had barely been aware of Mabel Ellen's existence, and had hardly so much as spoken to her excepting with reference to one or other of his modest requirements. But now she had suddenly become a real person to him.

At supper that same evening, as she waited at table, he caught himself looking at her more than once with a certain curiosity, for Mr. Brown was a student of human nature

in his quiet way.

"Some day," he said to himself, "some day I must find out a bit about that child. There's something—something—what is it?
—I know, something elfin about her. I wonder . . ."

Miss Tootle's voice interrupted his train of thought.

"Well, Mr. Brown, and did you have a pleasant walk to-day?"

He turned to reply with his usual courtesy ("Quite the gentleman," Miss Tootle used to say of him) and Mabel Ellen passed out of his mind for the moment. But he dreamed about her that night. A strange dream in which she appeared as a wood-dryad with streaming soft hair and a green, leafy dress.

But they were stock-taking at the shop at which he was employed, and for the next week or two he worked so hard, early and late, that everything else was well-nigh driven from his mind.

Yet still at the back of his brain there lurked the shadowy resolution—"Some day I will find out"; and when he met Mabel Ellen on the stairs or passed her in the hall he would nod and smile and give her friendly greeting, to which she would respond with a shy gravity which had something rather touchingly childish about it.

And then, quite suddenly, the atmosphere of Maddison House was startlingly and not unpleasantly disturbed by a most exciting event.

Miss Tootle's dim uncle suddenly became an astonishingly real person—at least, that is perhaps not quite the way to put it, since it was by reason of his decease that he definitely materialised, as it were; but he did now emerge, posthumously, as a solid, irrefutable fact, through the medium of various impressively exciting letters bearing imposing red seals, which were presently to be reinforced by the appearance of still more impressive, decorously congratulatory gentlemen in the correctest of morning coats, who were able to assure Miss Tootle, without any shadow of a doubt, that she had inherited from the aforesaid uncle a fortune of no less than fifteen thousand pounds.

Maddison House was naturally greatly interested in this thrilling event. Even Miss Bitherage's grief at losing her best boarder—for, of course, Miss Tootle could hardly be expected to remain in obscurity in the Maddington Road, and had indeed publicly announced her intention of "going into Society"—even Miss Bitherage's regret was tempered by the glow of reflected glory cast upon her establishment by reason of her boarder's good fortune.

"You might keep a boarding-house for fifty years and no such thing happen," she would observe, very truly, to interested inquirers.

At the end of a fortnight Miss Tootle departed in a final burst of splendour, which embraced a farewell dinner, where champagne flowed plentifully, and where the menu included such delicacies as oysters and ices. She was a kind-hearted creature and bestowed generous largesse upon the various members of the household staff.

And so it came about that Mabel Ellen found herself suddenly in possession of a crisp new ten-shilling note, unexpected and unforeseen, a sheer gift from the gods.

It was for her an unprecedented situation. Of her small monthly wage she always sent half religiously home to her mother; the remainder had to be carefully economised in order to provide her with shoes, clothes and bus fares. An occasional—a very occasional—sixpenny or shilling tip from a boarder had to suffice her for her few modest luxuries.

And Mabel Ellen had oddly extravagant tastes. She had been known recklessly to spend a whole sixpence on a bunch of violets from the flower woman at the corner. Scented soap was another of her weaknesses. She was fond of chocolate, but if it came to a choice between the two it was the soap that invariably won the day.

When the taxi which bore the fortunate Miss Tootle to the splendours of her new position had finally vanished down the road, she ran swiftly upstairs and put the ten shillings safely away in the shabby little purse which she had retrieved long ago from a boarder's waste-paper basket; but all the rest of the day she went about her work with a strange, warm, excited feeling in her heart.

One thought, and one thought only, dominated her mind—the blue boots.

What matter if she were badly in need of a stout pair of shoes to keep the wet out? What matter that her winter coat was so thin and threadbare that the wind on cold days seemed to blow right through her body? Spring would not be long now in coming. She had half a crown put by in her little purse; that would pay for patching her boots, and Miss Tootle had given her a discarded jersey-coat which she could wear under her serge one.

If only the satin boots were still there! Her heart contracted at the thought of the bare possibility of their having been sold during the few days that had elapsed since she had last seen them.

She could not possibly get out till tomorrow. At this very moment someone might be buying, might have just bought them.

How her heart thumped the next afternoon as she drew near the little shop, and what a joyful warmth raced through it when her accustomed eye was able to pick them out from the dingy confusion of the window.

She entered, trembling.

"I'd like those blue boots out of the window, please," she said.

The old man peered at her.

"The blue satin boots?" he said. "Yes. Thirteen-and-six, they are."

Mabel Ellen's heart seemed to drop in her breast like a stone.

"You said ten-and-six when I asked before," she said.

"Oh, no," said the old man, still peering at her with blinking red eyes. "Thirteenand-six, them boots is. I couldn't take a penny less. They're beautiful boots. Made for a lady on the 'alls. Never worn. They was too small. Brought 'em 'ere 'erself. Thirteen-and-six; not a penny less."

Mabel Ellen was nearly crying.

happy. At first she kept the boots wrapped

up in an old apron, in her tin box. Every

evening when she came up to her tiny

bedroom she unwrapped the apron with

"I could give you twelve-and-six," she said. "It's all I've got."

The old man looked at her for a moment in silence. Her heart was now beating so fiercely that she feared he might hear it

thump. "Well, I might let 'em go at twelve-andsix as a very special price," he said at last,

"' What on earth have you got on?' she said at last."

"but I shan't make a penny on it—not a penny."

He opened the glass case awkwardly and slowly, took out the boots, wrapped them in a torn piece of dirty white paper and handed them over to Mabel Ellen in return for her entire capital.

For three weeks she was beatifically

eager, trembling fingers, and put the boots on the top of the box with the candle beside them so that she could gaze at them while she was undressing, and every morning, the moment she awoke, her eyes sought the spot where they stood, dimly outlined against the grubby wall-paper.

Sometimes she would put them on for a

few minutes before she went to bed—they fitted her little feet perfectly—and sit gazing at them in a kind of rapturous ecstasy.

Then one day she grew bolder.

the bottom drawer of the dresser, arranged over her shabby skirt and rough woollen stockings, and sat down to read. She did not read much.



"Mabel Ellen was standing there, the picture of confusion and misery."

It was Mrs. Wilson's night out, and as soon as the washing-up was done Mabel Ellen stole upstairs and carried her precious treasures down to the kitchen, concealed under her apron.

Once in the basement she slipped off her shabby slippers and put on the boots, lingering lovingly over the lacing and tying.

Then she sat down on the wooden rockingchair, with an old lace curtain, which she had discovered under the ironing blanket in Every minute her eyes wandered down to the elegant loveliness of her feet and ankles casually, as it were.

She felt like a real princess, like a lovely lady in a tale, like a vision in a poem. She forgot the mean kitchen, the drudgery of the day, the general dullness of life: she saw only the blue boots.

When she went home that week on her customary fortnightly visit she said nothing about the boots. She felt a little guilty.

"And did Miss Tootle give yer anythink when she went?" asked her mother finally.

"Yes, she did," said Mabel Ellen. "She gave me ten shillings. I bought some boots with it." Her mother nodded approval. The girl was a good girl, none better. She hoped she'd get on in the world. The child deserved it.

Mabel Ellen could not meet her mother's eye. She went to the door and looked out into the little yard.

"It's coming on to rain," she said irrelevantly.

It was the third week after the purchase of the boots that the DREADFUL THING happened.

It was Thursday night again, and, consequently, again Mrs. Wilson's night out.

Mabel Ellen was sitting by the fire at about half-past nine, with the lace curtain draped over her legs and her satin-booted feet elegantly protruding from its folds, deeply immersed in *Ivanhoe*, a sixpenny copy of which Mr. Brown had rather shyly offered her the night before.

Mrs. Wilson never came home till after tenthirty. Cæsar had retired as usual. She was quite safe for another hour. She was so absorbed in her book that she entirely failed to hear on the stair the heavy footstep of the cook, who for some unknown reason was returning home very much earlier than was her wont. She was well in the kitchen before Mabel Ellen had time to realise the situation. She jumped up in hot confusion, the lace curtain falling round her on the floor. Mrs. Wilson spoke no word. Her eyes were fixed on the blue boots, as indeed they well might be. Short of a mermaid's tail it would have been difficult to imagine a more incongruous termination to the figure of Mabel Ellen. The cook's gaze travelled up to her abashed face and then down again

"What on earth have you got on?" she said at last.

"They're mine. I bought them," stammered Mabel Ellen.

"Bought them!" said Mrs. Wilson. "Bought them! Never in all my born days did I ever see anythink so ridic'lous. And what on earth are you doing with that there curtain?" She stared again at the hapless Mabel Ellen, standing there, the picture of confusion and misery. Then suddenly she burst into a great laugh.

"Pretendin' you was a Duchess, I suppose," she said. "One of them beautiful

ladies out of your books. Dressin' up! I never 'card such a scream. Won't they all laugh when I tell 'em. Our Mabel Ellen in blue satin boots of an evenin'. I suppose it'll be a blue satin dress-next. Oh dear, oh dear, it's a long time since I've 'eard such a joke. Who'd 'a' thought it? Blue satin boots! And this is your ladyship's dress, I suppose," kicking the lace curtain with her toe. "Oh, what a joke!" She sat down on a chair, shaking with laughter like a great jelly.

Presently she calmed down a little, wiping the tears from her face. "I've 'arf a mind to call Miss Bitherage down to see yer," she said. But this was too much. Mabel Ellen could bear it no longer. She turned and fled.

"Yer've left yer court train behind yer," she heard Mrs. Wilson's voice call after her.

She paid no heed, stumbling desperately and blindly up the stairs to her own little room, where she flung herself on her knees against the bed with her face buried in the dingy, ragged counterpane, bedewing it with her hot tears.

But even in her misery she could not treat her beloved boots otherwise than tenderly. She rose presently, drew them off, wrapped them up in the old apron and thrust them right down to the bottom of the trunk.

Never, never would she wear them again. All her delight in them was gone, utterly

gone for ever.

She lay awake for hours, picturing the ignominy of the morrow. Mrs. Wilson would tell everyone, of course. Mrs. Podson, Cæsar, Miss Bitherage, probably even the milkman and the baker. They would all know.

And Miss Bitherage would be sure to pass the tale on to the boarders. It would be too good a joke to lose. They would nudge one another and smile when she came into the room to wait. "She wore blue satin boots in the kitchen, isn't it funny?" How would she ever face it? She had wild thoughts of running away in the night. Her dreams, when at last she fell asleep, were heavy and troubled.

It wasn't perhaps quite so bad next day as she imagined—but it was bad enough.

Mrs. Wilson was evidently bent on making the most of her tale, and the others were greatly amused, if not actually derisive.

Miss Bitherage even went so far as to give Mabel Ellen a little admonitory talk on the childishness and foolishness of spending her money in such an absurd fashion.

Old Mr. Walters, the retired civil servant,

who was reported to be nearly eighty and took snuff, stopped her on the stairs and

wagged his finger at her.

"You're the young lady with a passion for fancy footwear—eh? Regular little Cinderella—eh? Regular little Cinderella," he chuckled as if he had said something very funny. Mabel Ellen could hear him mumbling to himself as he went wheezily up the stairs, "Regular Cinderella," and still chuckling.

As dinner-time drew near she felt she could not face the ordeal of waiting at table. The more she thought about it the more certainly she knew that the thing was

impossible.

"Time yer went to tidy yerself up," said Mrs. Wilson at a quarter past seven, glancing at the clock. "I shall be dishing up in a minute or two."

Mabel Ellen shook her head. "I'm not going to wait to-night," she said in a low voice.

Mrs. Wilson gasped. "Not goin' ter wait to-night? What d'yer mean?"

"I can't," said Mabel Ellen.

"Can't?" said Mrs. Wilson. "I never heard such nonsense. You go this minute and get tidy or I'll have Miss Bitherage down."

Even this threat failed. Mabel Ellen was frightened, but firm; Cæsar had to manage the waiting single-handed that night. Mabel Ellen could hear laughter in the dining-room overhead. They were laughing about her and her boots, she was certain of it. Miss Bitherage was telling them all about it. Every one of them knew now—even Mr. Brown.

After dinner came swift retribution in the form of a descending Miss Bitherage, wrathfully demanding explanation. Cæsar had told her how Mabel Ellen had refused to come up.

She had no excuse to offer, no apology; she stood whitely mute, with a queer look of hunted defiance on her face.

And in the end Miss Bitherage's exasperation culminated in an uncompromising dismissal. "You can go to-morrow," she said. "I'll have no disobedient girls here. You can pack your things to-night. I'm sorry for your mother. I'm sorry for you, Mabel, but it's entirely your own fault. You've brought it all on yourself with your ridiculous behaviour. It's those blue boots behind it all. Don't think I don't know."

Next morning, when Mabel Ellen came up to clear the breakfast things away, for she was to get through her morning's work before going, she found Mr. Brown standing in front of the fire. She was a little astonished. It was after his usual time for leaving. He was generally off the minute he had finished breakfast. He looked at her with his customary quiet smile. She thought it was even kinder than usual.

"I hear you're leaving," he said. "Would you give me your address? I have a sister who is looking for someone to help her a bit with her little boy and the house. She's very kind. I'm sure you'd like her, and I know she'd like you."

Mabel Ellen's eyes filled with tears.

"Just write it down, will you?" the pleasant voice went on. "I'll let you know tomorrow. I shall see her to-night. And"—a little pause—"you will take your pretty boots there if you go, won't you? I want so much to see them some day. You'll let me, I hope? And I must lend you some more books. Poetry books, you know; I think you're a bit of a poet yourself, Mabel Ellen. Only a poet would think of wearing blue satin boots in the kitchen."

Mabel Ellen looked up. No, he was not laughing at her. Only still smiling his kind smile and holding out his hand to say goodbye, after carefully putting away his pocketbook with the address in it. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

From all of which the romantically minded reader might surmise that this is not quite the end of the story of Mabel Ellen's blue boots.

I have half a notion of the sort, too. But, then, I'm a bit romantically inclined myself.

#### THE STREET.

ALL the street is drab and grey
Where the busy people go;
No bird sings to greet the day,
There's no room for flowers to grow.

Yet I know that Spring is nigh— All her hope my spirit fills— For the flower-girls carry by Baskets full of daffodils.

BRIAN HILL.



# KEEPING EAST

### By ASHLEY MILNER

PETER was at work—a commercial artist's work—in his big, top-floor studio.

A shock-headed, pink-faced young man, very intent upon his job, at which he was doing remarkably well. He might, in fact, have been making himself rich, but for his habit of giving almost as freely as he earned. You touched his heart and, automatically, the cash dropped out of his pocket.

He finished some stippling he was at and then glanced above him at the big windows set in the roof-slant of the attic ceiling. For a week or more, he had been uneasily aware that those windows wanted cleaning outside, and his experience as a tenant warned him that they were not likely to be cleaned for another week or two unless he did the job himself.

"If I could push up the window far enough to climb out on the roof, I could

give 'em a brush down myself in half a minute," Peter reflected, with quite remarkable common sense in such matters for an artist and a bachelor.

He brought a ladder, pushed up the window, and then remained for a moment looking down through the slit between the window and the roof.

He was looking down the roof and across a fairly wide yard used by vans and lorries loading up from the various warehouses. And high up in a block of buildings opposite, he had fixed his eyes upon a girl sitting before a typewriter. Her desk faced the window and the light was falling upon her.

Without quite knowing why, Peter forgot what he was up the ladder for, and went on watching the girl. Something about her interested him in a rather pitiful way: the droop of her shoulders and the whiteness of her face. Despite the distance separating

them, he could see her clearly enough to be able to know that her hair was fair, her dress severely plain, her poise limply weak.

"She's crying!" muttered Peter suddenly. "I sort of knew she would!"

The girl's little fair head had dropped forward, her hands were clenched to her face, he could see her shoulders shaking. That morbidly sensitive heart of his watched through his eyes; there was something in the situation, or in the girl, that gripped him

Too interested to study manners, he went down the ladder and unhooked a pair of field-glasses from behind the door. When he had reached his rung again, and had focussed her, she flashed into startlingly plain vision as a quite young girl, delicately pretty (her hands had dropped from her face), but still appealing strongly to his pity.

"The poor kid! Poor little kid!" mum-

bled Peter.

He added, to no one: "She looks ill. Her face is pinched and her hands and arms are too white. There's something wrong..."

At that moment, the girl started up and glanced round. Someone—her employer, no doubt—had evidently come into that part of the room invisible to Peter. The girl grabbed at her handkerchief, which was lying by a telephone that glistened in the light that fell on her desk.

A hard-faced and beefy creature—Peter hated him at sight—came into sight behind the girl. He was wagging a sheet of paper which he presently flung down on the desk at the girl's side with every sign of disgust. Quite obviously, the fellow was raving at her for some fault. And although Peter had no views on the question Should Typists be Stormed At? he was instinctively certain that this particular typist needed far gentler handling than she was getting.

"Anyone but a fool could see that the girl's ill," said Peter, sticking at his peephole. "Someone ought to do something. But she's no business of mine, I suppose...."

He went back to his work, but found himself still thinking about her. He dropped his pencil at last and, hands in pockets, stared hard at nothing. She was no business of his, yet she worried him. She was on his brain too badly to let him work. Pretty and friendless-looking girls, who look ill, are not to be dismissed lightly from a young bachelor's mind. Certainly not from the mind of a bachelor so generous as Peter. Then, letting his eyes move again, he

noticed his own telephone. The idea resulting was hardly wonderful: one could almost call it obvious. Yet the sudden light in Peter's grey eyes might have suggested that he had discovered something enormously clever.

He went down the stairs, across the yard, and came back five minutes afterwards, repeating as a refrain the magic words: Guildhall, Seven, four, six, eight.

Peter rang up Guildhall 7468 and then went up the ladder to see what happened. He saw the girl reach wearily for the telephone as Peter's call came through. Peter ran down to his telephone again.

"Yes, Truscott and Company speaking," she said, in just the lightly pretty but tiredout voice that Peter expected. "Who's

there?"

"Only a friend," said Peter.

"Do you want to speak to Mr. Truscott?"

"No. I want to speak to you, his typist."

A startled pause. Then she asked:

"But who are you? I don't know your voice."

"A friend," repeated Peter. "Just a—a Voice from nowhere, that wishes you well. I want to talk to you."

"Oh, but it's nonsense!" exclaimed the girl. "Is it someone I know, trying to make fun?"

"No!" cried Peter. "But I can't explain. Think of me as a Voice. I know you're in trouble with your work. You were crying a minute ago. I saw you. You were using a blue-bordered handkerchief. I saw that. Your master has been into your office bullying you. . : ."

The girl gave a tiny scream. She darted to the window and stared out of it. But her window was recessed and rather hidden; also, it was curtained so that no one from below could possibly have seen her, whilst being too high for any vertical window on the yard to give a downward glimpse into it.

And why should a girl imagine that high up on a roof, nearly a hundred and fifty yards away, there was an attic window just widely enough opened to be peeped through, and that a man had been at that window with a pair of powerful field-glasses?

Utterly bewildered, the girl held on to the telephone whilst staring round the room. She even looked up at the ceiling. Without question, someone must have seen her. Someone, moreover, who could telephone to her. Yet how on earth was it possible for her to have been seen, except by some miracle of sensevision?

"Listen, little girl," said Peter. "I just rang you up to tell you that your luck's on the turn. Things are going to come right for you. This Cheer up! friend of yours who can see you through brick walls is going to get you through this muddle of yours, if he can. Don't worry about that letter that old Truscott threw down at your side-looked as if he wanted to throw it at you, didn't he? I saw him. Forget what the old idiot said. Just carry on the best you can for a bit longer. Blue skies are coming. Better times are on the way! I'll ring you up again tomorrow about this time. Cheerio."

He rang off. The girl put down the telephone and had another searching look round her apparently secure office, dazed and still incredulous.

And Peter felt as ridiculously happy about his feat as one would expect a ridiculously happy young man to feel.

Before the same hour of the next day, he had rigged up his telephone so that he could stand and watch her through the field-glasses whilst he talked.

He had some time to wait before a moment came when he judged she would be able to talk to him; it amused him, meanwhile, to see the scared glance she directed at her



telephone every now and again. Presently he rang into her office.

"It's you again, Voice?" she cried excitedly. "I thought you must be some crazy dream I'd had. Look here, who are you?"

"I'm not a 'you,' I'm a 'what,'" said Peter. "A Voice."

"You can't be. You're someone. Are you one of these thought-readers with double-sight?"

"Sight enough to see that you're leaning

on your right elbow—you've just jumped up, though! A minute or two ago you were sorting papers—there was one you couldn't find. But you found it among that pile on the side desk, and you pinned it . . ."

"Oh, stop! It's uncanny . . . And I won't believe you're only a voice. You

must be real."

"Yes, I'm real," said Peter, without pride.

"Yet I can see. You're sitting facing your window, dressed in grey, there's a letter just started in your typewriter, and the carriage of your typewriter knocked down the stand of your shorthand book just before I rang up. You are now staring up at the sky as if you thought I might be in a hovering aeroplane. . . . Yes, there's no question I can see. I've a sort of second



"'It's you again, Voice?' she cried excitedly."

"But don't bother about me. Just call me Peter. What's your name?"

"Ailie Redfern. But how am I to talk to you? It's like talking to a ghost. Is it really telepathy?"

"Something like that."

"And you can see me, now?"

"At this very moment, yes."

"But, positively, there isn't a single window that could look into this room behind the curtain . . ."

sight where you're concerned. But don't try to know any more, or you'll spoil the magic. Just tell me this, little Ailie. Are you ill?"

Ailie gasped again. He could hear that and he could see it. And he imagined that his question brought tears to her eyes. But she would not answer the question for a long time. She implored him to explain himself until, convinced that he would refuse as often as she pleaded, she told him what he wanted to know.

"I've not the chance to be ill, Peter Man," she told him, quiveringly. "I can't afford to be. I'm on my own, you see, and if I fell ill again I should lose my job here. After being out of work three months before I got this berth, I daren't risk taking any more time off."

"No money?"

" No."

"So you're working there in your office when you ought to be away being looked after. Getting worse and worse every day, perhaps. People die that way," said Peter. "Now look here, little Ailie. You'll get something in the morning. Take it with you to-morrow evening to Doctor Cartwright and ask him to tell you what's the matter with you. Don't fail, or you'll break the spell. This is the last time I shall ring you up unless you do what you're told. . . . Will you go, Ailie?"

"Why should you care, spirit or ghost or magician or whatever you are, Peter? What difference can it make to anyone else

whether I'm ill or not?"

"I'm a benignant Voice, sent along to look after you by the guardian angel that sits up aloft," lied Peter cheerfully. "Haven't I told you enough about yourself to show you that I'm wonderful where you're concerned? And I know this about you, too: that you'll go to see that doctor and he'll get you fit and strong again. . . . Remember, I'm behind you all the time. I'm going to see you through this. Cheer up. Get ready for the good time, little lonely girl. Goodbye."

Peter rang off and, climbing down the little ladder, sat down at his desk and com-

muned with himself.

"You blithering idiot, Peter Man!" he said at last. But somehow, remembering that shake in the sick girl's voice, he couldn't

quite believe that he was.

Coincidence lent a hand when he found himself in a tea room that evening almost side by side with her. The proximity was Peter's arrangement; he had spotted her as he entered the place, and he settled himself at the next table.

She was with a girl friend and Peter saw no evil in listening, occasionally, to what she was saying. It was her voice, rather than its chatter, that he wanted to hear at closer range. And he found there was a thrill in it, for him. There was a gentleness about her that seemed to reach out in some occult way and set his heart thinking and dreaming. He had the feeling that he had

known her for years, but by some accident had never met her until now.

"Queer!" mused Peter. "She's so exactly what I'd imagined her to be. Look at her feeding that stray mongrel with sugar... and risking a bitten finger to stroke its dirty head. She's my sort! What a miserable pity I don't know her..."

He sent two pounds by postal orders to her business address; he didn't know where she lodged. When he rang her up that afternoon, he wanted to hear no thanks from her; he only told her to be sure to see the doctor. "You can't return the money because you don't know where this Voice hangs out," he said. "So you must use it and be quiet about it."

Late that evening, he called to see Doctor Cartwright, who was a personal friend of his. Cartwright was able to tell him that Ailie Redfern was a Lancashire girl of good family, but suddenly left alone to do the best she could for herself. She was a stranger in

this neighbourhood.

Also, there was news of a more serious sort.

"You're quite possibly saving that girl's life," remarked the doctor, with the professional sang-froid of a man whose daily business is in lives. "The trouble that she's been afraid to own up to, for fear of losing her precious job, is serious. I think she might have died if you'd not interfered in time. Certainly, she would have suffered. . . . However, she's to see a specialist to-morrow and then, almost certainly, it means an operation. . . . By the way, operations cost money. Are you prepared . . ?"

Peter nodded. "Do everything that can help her," he said moodily. "And, for the love of Mike, get something more cheerful to tell me about her next time I see you."

The next afternoon, Peter watched through his peep-slit and saw that her place was empty. Then, suddenly, she came. Within a couple of minutes her telephone bell had

rung.

"News for you, wonder-man telepathist," she said, her face wistfully tender as she said it. "They say I'm ill. I've come in to give my employer warning, and he told me, of course, that he couldn't keep my job open for me. This afternoon, I'm going to a Nursing Home. . . . I say, Peter! Whether you're a spirit or a man, why on earth are you so good? They say you're going to pay!"

"I suppose it's because I like you, Ailie

girl," said Peter. "Anyhow, I'll see you through. Clean right through: got that?"

"Yes. Oh, you dear, whoever you are!... Listen, Peter. Could you send me something of yours to the Nursing Home? Something I could keep under my pillow—something you've touched and used?. Could you—would you?"

He promised it and saw her get up and walk away from the window. It was the end of the jest; he knew he would never

watch her so again.

During the days following, he kept pretty closely in touch with the Nursing Home people and with Cartwright. It was disappointing to hear that Ailie was a disheartening patient.

She had got it into her head that she was "going west." Maybe her life, until now, had been too tough a struggle to give her any overpowering desire to begin it all again. A little fatalist, she fancied herself at the end of things. And, in fancying it, she was making it far more likely. Patients who face a big ordeal without the heart for

it, rarely keep east.

Peter, hearing this with a dismay that startled even himself, talked to Cartwright about it. And Cartwright, being a modern doctor and gifted with a fair share of imagination, fell in with Peter's ideas without demur. There was a simple extension made to the telephone at the Nursing Home, and the girl's bed was wheeled to another end of the room. Ailie's eyes lit up when she saw the receiver of a telephone close to her bed.

Peter rang up the next morning and she

lay listening.

"It's you, Peter Man?"

"And it's you, Ailie? God help you now. The time's drawing close for you now; before you know where you are, you'll be mended and getting well again. It will only be dark a little while. You'll come through easily! Don't I know every-

thing? Have I ever told you wrong? I know!"

Ailie was crying. The nurse laughed softly and pressed the telephone to her ear with gentle insistence.

"Ailie darling!" his voice came through.
"Why didn't you answer? Listen. I've seen you. I know you. And I—I rather think I care tremendously for you. You hear? I want you for a tremendous pal when you're better, little lonely girl. Oh, be brave. Be brave for Peter Man's sake. I'm going to make you a promise. Can you hear?"

Ailie had risen in her bed, eyes ashine.

"Yes, I'm listening . . ."

"I shall be near you when you come back out of the dark. That's my promise. You're going to live and we're going to be everything to each other. You'll only need to open your eyes and you'll see who's been mystifying you. The play's all over and the real thing starts when you wake. You've seen that portrait of me? Well, it's discouraging for you, but some folks say I'm better-looking than that. . . . How good to hear you laugh, Ailie. . . . Oh, live, LIVE, little girl! It's my heart that's asking it. There's such gorgeous good times coming for us both, if you will. Fight hard. You'll fight hard?"

" Yes!"

She let the telephone fall from her hands. They saw a look in her eyes that made the matron nod and smile as she turned away.

Ailie won through. Even under the anæsthetic, maybe, she was dreaming things—or looking for Peter.

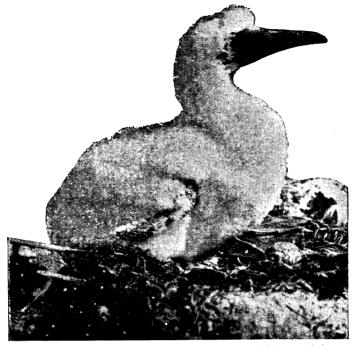
When she woke, Peter was kneeling at her side. Just for a moment, to show her that he had kept his promise as she had kept hers.

It was his face, in fact, that told her she had come safely back into a world that had

love waiting for her.

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

If he says, "Now then, Sammy Boy, you mustn't lag behind; Come on, at once, you naughty dog!"—I know I needn't mind Or pay the least attention, for he's almost sure to wait Until I've finished chasing cats or dodging through a gate. Yes, Master's very patient, and I know just where I am If I hear cries of "Sammikins!" or "Samivell!" or "Sam!" But—no matter how attractive the cat or pal or smell—I make a quick bee-line to him when he calls "SAM-U-EL!!"



"He was still covered with down, that made him look like one of the woolly toys sold in shops."

## THE CLIFF BABY

By OLIVER G. PIKE, F.Z.S., F.R.P.S.

T the end of February a pair of gannets arrived, with many thousands of their companions, on the steep cliff that for generations past had been their stronghold. The waves, coming in from the great Atlantic Ocean, washed around the base. For five hundred feet above the rocks were jagged and broken, with many convenient ledges for birds to build their nests upon. The rough state of the beach beneath showed how vast lumps of rock had occasionally crashed down, but notwithstanding the sides were safe for the birds; otherwise they would not have stayed.

A fortnight after the birds arrived they began to build their nest. They took possession of the ledge they had used in previous years, although they had to fight three

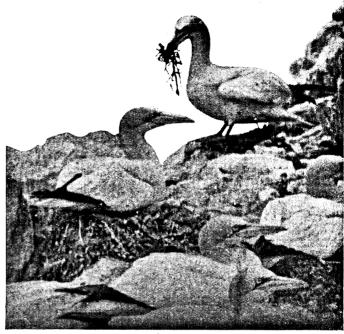
rivals who also wanted it. The nest was made of pieces of seaweed that they found floating on the sea, these being intertwined with coarse grass collected from the green slopes above. After two weeks of rather strenuous work, their home was ready.

Eventually it contained an egg, just one chalky white egg. For six weeks the birds sat on this in turn, never leaving it exposed, except when they changed the guard at the nest.

Then arrived the cliff baby. To say he was ugly would be gentle flattery; he was far, far worse. He resembled, more than anything, a reptile, and a rather repulsive one too. His eyes were tightly sealed, his body was black, while the objects that would some day be beautiful long, white wings

looked like two black fleshy flappers fixed to his sides. When he opened his beak, as he did if he heard any noise near his nest, he looked even more terrible, and it would have been a brave enemy that would have attacked him.

One morning, while he was quite small, a large rat wandering along the. ledge climbed up the side of the nest and looked at him. Instantly the baby opened his big beak, and the enemy hesitated before touching him. That moment of hesitation sealed the rat's doom. The mother gannet, returning from the sea with a supply of food for her youngster, landed clumsily on the side of her home. When a five-pound weight, coming down from a height



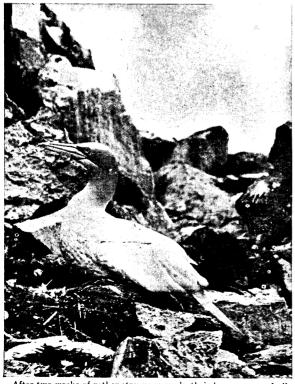
"The nest was made of pieces of seaweed that they found floating on the sea,"

of eighty or more feet, lands with a crash, as this bird did, there is some force behind

the blow. Unfortunately for the rat, but luckily for the baby gannet, she landed full upon the animal's back. It gave just one cry, slipped from under

just one cry, slipped from under her feet, rolled to the edge of the cliff, tumbled over, and crashed down to the beach far beneath.

After lying in its nest for about a week, during which time the parents treated the baby almost as if it were the egg it had recently left, that is, sat upon it. with the exception of giving it two meals a day, it began to look more like a bird. A few tufts of white down appeared on the black skin, the eyes began to open, and for the first time he was able to look upon his world. Above and beneath, and on all sides, there were babies like himself. Some were older, others small and just as ugly. But as he grew stronger, a beautiful soft down appeared all over his body, and he was able to sit up in the nest and take notice of the busy world into which he had come. All around him were thousands of birds. Some were flying to the cliff and gliding past with outspread wings. Thousands more seemed to be playing a



After two weeks of rather strenuous work, their home was ready."

game of "follow the leader," for they circled out to sea, then, returning to the cliffs, attempted to make a landing. majority failed and sailed out to sea again. It was the difficulty of landing on their steep home that caused them so to act. If the wind is blowing strongly, the gannet must land against it. Many of the birds, with their six-foot stretch of wing, found landing more than difficult. Some of them crashed badly, landing on the ledge with a resounding thud, then, stunned with the impact, fell back, to meet their death on the rocks hundreds of feet beneath. Some even recovered from the terrible fall, but found themselves with broken wings on ledges above the water. To these death came



"Force was the only law, and the powerful beak the only weapon."

slowly, with the grim spectre of starvation as executioner, for in this great bird fortress, filled with thousands of birds, little sympathy was shown. If a neighbour fell, or met with a mishap, it was no concern of the others, and the victim was left to its fate.

In this gannet city there were many differences to settle. Force was the only law, and the long, powerful beak the only weapon. Two birds with a dispute to settle would find a convenient ledge, and on this fight their duel. One would hold the other's beak, or, if both beaks were open when they met, each probably obtained a firm grip. Then they would push or pull in opposite directions. For ten, or even twenty minutes, they struggled, until one, losing its balance, was pushed over the side. If this happened,

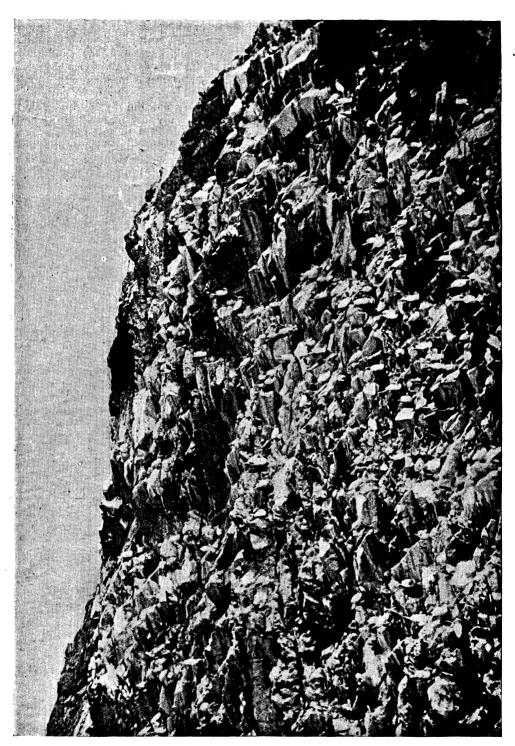
the defeated one would drop many yards before obtaining the use of its wings, and in falling often struck a jagged rock, being partly stunned and crashing to the beach or sea beneath.

With so many thousands of nests around, one looking very much like its neighbours, it was little wonder that a gannet returning from the sea sometimes landed in the wrong place, to settle on a stranger's nest. In one such instance the owner returned later to find that a neighbour had taken possession of her home, so she proceeded to eject her in the only way she knew. That was to grip her beak and pull. For five minutes she tugged, but the bird on the nest took a lot of shifting, and, try as she could, it seemed

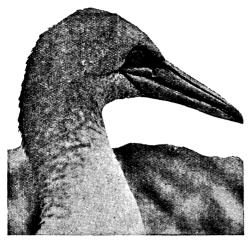
impossible to shift her. stranger might well have stayed there had it not been for the rightful owner's mate. He fortunately arrived on the scene in the middle of the struggle and took in the situation at a glance. A rival had taken possession of his home. and his dutiful mate was doing her best to eject him. She had hold of the usurper's beak; there appeared to be only one thing to do, and he acted quickly. waddled to the rear of the enemy, then with his big beak gripped a fair portion of her tail, and while his mate pulled in one direction, he tugged in the other! Under such a strain something had to give way, and it was the bird between these determined defenders that had to go. With a loud squawk, she opened her wings, struggled to the side of the cliff.

slipped over the side, and was lost in the vast flock flying around. With a few happy chuckles the owner then settled down upon her egg, while her mate showed his devotion and pride in her by rubbing his big head against hers.

Such scenes the cliff baby daily looked upon. He saw his companions in all stages of growth. Some were larger than he and sat up in their nests. As week followed week, he also became large and plump. He was still covered with down, that made him look like one of the woolly toys sold in shops, which little children love to hug. But few would have cared to handle him, for the stench that surrounded his home, and which you could detect a mile from the cliffs, clung to him. Perhaps he did not



"They arrived, with thousands of their companions, on the steep cliff."



"The gannet is devoid of nostrils."

notice it, for the gannet is devoid of nostrils, but in hot, close weather it was almost more than a human being could stand.

Weeks passed and still the cliff baby sat in his nest, waiting for the food his parents brought him. As he got larger and heavier he wanted more and more, until it seemed that his hunger would never be satisfied. Splendid herrings were given him, for the gannet knows where the best of these fish are to be found. The parents went far afield to collect the food, and as they flew high up over the water they could quickly detect the When one saw a fish shoals beneath. near the surface it brought its wings to its side, ducked its head, then with a headlong plunge dived to the sea. With a splash that you could see a mile away it entered the water and disappeared, coming up presently

This was with its prey. swallowed, and the bird went up again to watch for another opportunity. When a number had been captured it went off to the baby on the great cliff. On landing at the nest, the parent opened its beak, the youngster did the same, and with their beaks locked together the food was pumped from the parent's throat into that of its offspring.

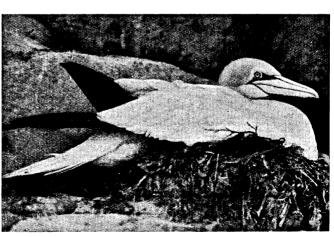
For more than two months the cliff baby sat up there, never wandering from its nest, and showing no desire to leave. It was now heavier than its mother, and she went a good five pounds. Had it shown any inclination to fly, it would have been impossible for it to do so, for its body, now overgorged with food, was too great a weight for the wings to lift.

The parents now did a wise thing; they refused the baby any more food. It had sat up there, content to wait for its meals, since the early summer, and it was now September. It was quite time this big overgrown sluggard tried to gain its own living. There was only one way to make it do so, and that was to show that it must leave its nest to enter the gannet world.

As the days went by the baby called loudly for food; the parents often visited the nest but showed no sympathy for their spoiled child. For a long time they had pampered it, but now it seemed they had no affection left, for no matter how loudly it called no food was given. With no nourishment, it began to lose weight; the fat on its body became less, and a great hunger took possession of it. As the big baby looked on the scene around it saw hundreds of youngsters in the same plight.

More days passed and still no food arrived, so at last the young gannet left its nest, walked timidly to the edge of the great precipice and looked down. Far beneath was the sea, and on it thousands of small white dots. These it perceived were young gannets like itself. For another day it hesitated, then, gathering all its pluck, took the great plunge.

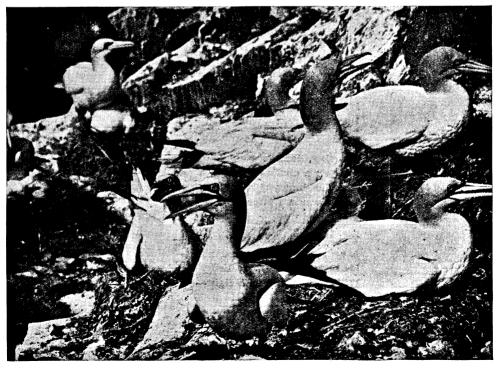
Down and down it tumbled; its wings, measuring nearly six feet from tip to tip, were opened, but the muscles were not yet ready for flight. Down, still down, flapping



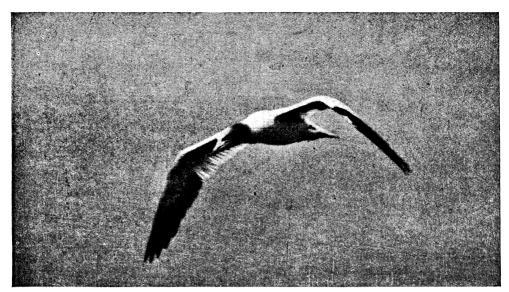
"For six weeks the tirds sat upon the egg in turn."



"All around him were thousands of birds."



"A rival had taken possession of his home."



"She flew high up over the water,"

wildly, it went. The green sea, and those white dots ever getting larger, seemed to be rushing up to meet it. At last it was upon them, and with one loud cry it struck the water. There was a plop, a terrific splash, and when the young gannet recovered its senses it found itself swimming easily, with

its parents by its side. Once having used its wings, it flapped them and found that it could travel short distances. Its parents now showed the young bird how to obtain food, and a few weeks later it left its old haunt, with thousands of its companions, to wander at will over the seas of the world.

#### A SONG FROM A BARE BOUGH.

I SAW a valiant cardinal—
Dark-red against the winter dawn,
He whistled from a leafless tree
Upon a barren lawn:

The tiny, dauntless splotch of red Shot up a challenge straight and high— A rocket burst of silver stars To shower a winter sky.

The little brave, intrepid thing—
A conqueror of cold and night—
He drenched the bare boughs suddenly
With colour and with light—

A triumph and a victory
That I have come to understand—
I laughed—a broken laugh and took
Life once more by the hand.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.

# THE END AND THE MEANS •

### By RICHMAL CROMPTON

• ILLUSTRATED BY E. WELCH RIDOUT

⊚

RNOLD FRANKLYN, successful novelist and best-seller, read over the little sheaf of press cuttings with a faint smile. He was standing by his desk in such a position that if anyone knocked at the door he could quickly thrust the press cuttings into the open drawer, close it and take up the literary paper which was ready to hand on his desk before he said "Come in." Arnold Franklyn never liked to be seen reading his press cuttings. When first they arrived he skimmed them through with his pleasant, deprecating smile and thrust them carelessly into a drawer, from which no one ever saw him take them again. But in secret he could not help taking them out again and reading them through several times. They were cuttings of which a man might justly be proud. For though Arnold Franklyn was a best-seller he was a writer of literary distinction and restraint. He was no mechanical producer of incoherent sensationalism and purple patches. There was about his work a delicacy and subtlety that happened to have hit the taste of critics and reading public alike. His success, too, was so recent that no critic had as yet decided that it was time to depose him from his pedestal to make room for someone else.

As a matter of fact, his success had been no "fluke," and he knew it. He had worked hard. His sensitive face was worn and lined despite its expression of pleasantness and humour. He looked older than he really was. He had always been a merciless task-master to himself. He had followed a rigid course of reading and in his writing had set himself a high standard of restraint and purity. He had followed no clap-trap method, surrendered his ideals for no temporary popularity. He had never flinched from the path he set himself. He loved his art for its own sake. All he had asked of it

was a competency and the praise of the discerning few. He had never worked for fame. No one had been more surprised than he when fame had come to him and as if by a miracle his books had suddenly begun to sell in their thousands.

He himself, too, had become suddenly as popular as his books. He had an attractive personality—an engaging blend of whimsical humour, quick perceptions and a frank almost boyish modesty, which, especially now that he was a celebrity, enhanced his charm. His sudden rise to fame seemed to have changed him not at all. Yet he was at the moment what used to be termed a "lion." A bewildering number of invitations stood upon the mantelpiece of his study. Letters of appreciation lay piled upon his desk. He always made a point of replying to these personally—charming little letters in his small, neat handwriting, which he knew meant so much to the recipients.

He thought he heard a step in the passage outside and quickly lowered the little sheaf of press cuttings to the drawer with one hand, stretching out the other for the literary journal. But the footsteps passed. No one was coming in. He began to read through the cuttings again.

There was one that he read several times. It was a character study of the author and did not mention his works. He was so famous now that it was unnecessary to mention his works. Any man who could have read such an account of himself without his vanity being stirred would have been greater than or less than human. Arnold Franklyn was neither. And it was not a piece of fulsome flattery. It did not ring untrue. It was rather a discerning analysis. The character drawn was Arnold Franklyn as the world was now beginning to know him—charming, whimsical, diffident, cultured, sympathetic. The faint smile lingered about

his sensitive lips as he read. It was not a complacent smile. He was no young man enjoying a fame that had sprung up in a night. He was a middle-aged man and he had won what he had won by sheer hard work. Still, it was pleasant reading. And it was all new enough to thrill him despite his much advertised humility. Almost, in that moment, as he read the cutting for the third time, he joined the host of hero worshippers who knelt at Arnold Franklyn's feet. He was charming; he was famous; and fame had not spoilt him. Again he

"I shall always owe everything to you, dearest."

Such emotion had, of course, been quite suitable to those days, but it was not suitable to these, not suitable to Arnold Franklyn, successful novelist—for character see cutting he still held in his hand—and his wife.

His relations with his wife had altered subtly since his sudden fame. He was halfconsciously aware of it. It could not be helped. As a famous literary man he had calls on his time that as an unknown scribbler



"Again he thought he heard his wife's footsteps and his hand made a quick movement towards the drawer."

thought he heard his wife's footsteps and his hand made a quick movement towards the drawer. In the old days, of course, when the rare cuttings arrived (for though the critics had never condemned him they had for many years practically ignored him) he and his wife had read them together, read them over and over again, gloating over them unashamedly. She had kissed him with tears in her eyes and said, "Darling, it's splendid—I know you'll be famous one day—yes, it's shameful that there are so few—but everyone of them praises you, you see." And he had kissed her and said,

he had never known. Margaret was a sensible woman. She did not expect things to be the same. He was growing more and more popular as a guest at London dinnerparties. He was pleasurably aware that much of his social success, though it owed its origin to his writing, was independent of it. He loved Margaret dearly, but he could not pretend even to himself that she held the same place in his scheme of things that she had held before he became famous. He slipped the cutting into the drawer, closed it, and looked round the room. He had sometimes in the days of his early struggle

dreamed of a study like this, but he had never thought that he would ever really have one. It was a room worthy of his position. It reflected his tastes, æsthetic and restrained—dark oak-panelled walls, an exquisite Persian carpet, a carved desk, a lacquered cabinet, soft gleams of subtle colouring in picture or vase carefully chosen to relieve the prevailing dimness. It was the room of a man with fine artistic perception. It had figured in a good many illustrated interviews. He thought of the room he had called his "study" before success came to him—the small cheaply furnished room that was sitting-room as well as study, that had held his wife's arm-chair and work-box. as well as his desk and books. She used to sit there sewing-mending or making the children's clothes-while he wrote. He had liked her to be there with him. He used to say in those days that the sight of her fair head bent over her work inspired him. They had only had one maid and he had helped his wife in the house a good deal. He had often left his work at a critical moment to make the baby's food. Or he had kept one of the children amused in his study to relieve her. He had felt no resentment. At the time he had imagined that he rather enjoyed it, but now, looking back, he felt a distaste and a faint resentment. A man of his genius should never have been subjected to household tasks like that. . . .

His wife never used this study as a sittingroom. It belonged to him alone. The arrangement had been a tacit one. Nothing had ever been said about it, but since this room had been furnished she had never entered it, except when she had to speak to him about something, and he had never asked her to. He was glad that she should not use it as a sitting-room. Arnold Franklyn sitting at that carved and inlaid desk producing his immortal masterpieces filled the picture completely. There was no room in it for the pale fair woman who had once shared it with him. He had persuaded himself that he worked better alone, that their cramped surroundings had considerably hampered his genius in the old days. Margaret was the sort of wife who always seemed to know exactly what one wanted. She had known in the old days that he wanted her to be with him. She knew now that he wanted to be alone. After all, she had a beautiful drawing-room and a sittingroom of her own. He was happy in being able to give her beautiful things at last. She had been a wonderful wife to him.

Never in all their married life had they quarrelled—not even in the old days when they lived higgledy-piggledy on the top of each other, when there was every excuse for quarrelling. Now, of course, there was no excuse for quarrelling.

Margaret had never failed him and she was not failing him now. If they saw less of each other than formerly, it was because his life was so much fuller than it used to His press of engagements and social duties left him little time for his own family. When he needed Margaret she was there. When he did not need her she was not there. Yet she was no shadowy nonentity of a woman. For all her quietness she had personality—more personality than any other woman he had ever known. She was a wife who did him credit in his new sphere. But she realised—tacitly, for of course they had never discussed the point—that he had less need of her than in the old days. People wanted to know him and meet him because of his work, but they did not necessarily want to know and meet all his family.

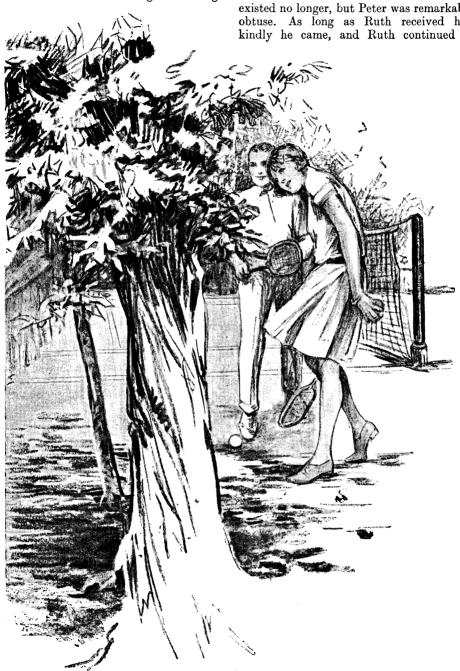
He walked over to the window and looked out upon the garden. They had only moved to the house this year, and he could not yet look out upon his garden-his garden—like this without a thrill of pride. He had never dreamed in the old days that he would ever own a garden like this. Teddie and Molly, his schoolboy son and daughter, were playing tennis. He watched them, his lips curved into a smile. He was a devoted father, intensely proud of his handsome son and two pretty daughters. two youngest ones were home for their holidays. He remembered that they would be going back to school next week and it occurred to him suddenly that he had seen very little of them. He must arrange to see more of them next holidays. . . .

Ruth, his elder daughter, was lying in a hammock beyond the tennis court. A boy lay on the grass by the side of the hammock. A misdirected ball went from the court towards the hammock. The young man caught it, turned round on the grass and flung it back laughing. As Franklyn saw the young man's face, the smile faded from his lips. It was Peter Marshall. This was the one cloud upon the happiness and pride of his newly found success. He didn't want Ruth to marry Peter. He had thought the affair would have died a natural death by now. It had begun—a boy and girl love-affair about two years ago. He had been fond of Peter then. The boy had very slight prospects, it is true, but it had not seemed to them. He didn't want Ruth to have the matter so much in those days. They had narrow, circumscribed life of poverty that liked him personally and thought that he he and Margaret had known. He welcomed would make Ruth a good husband. They his success for his children's sake as well as had sanctioned no definite engagement, but for his own. He wanted to give them a good that was chiefly because both Ruth and start in life. His publisher's eldest son, a Peter were so young. They had allowed Peter to come to the house. They had looked upon him as Ruth's future hus-But now-Franklyn was not a band. snob, he protested to himself, but circumstances had changed. They moved in quite a different circle. Peter did not "belong" any more.

"The young man caught it, turned round on the grass and flung it back laughing."

This (1 2)

Ruth was a very beautiful and charming girl. All the men who had come to the house had been obviously attracted by her. He loved his children and was ambitious for young man with splendid prospects, who had been to the house several times, had shown Ruth a good deal of attention. And there were others. There was, for instance, a baronet's son, who had met her only once, but was fishing hard for another invitation. He wanted Ruth to make a good marriage other than courteous, he had tried to convey to Peter by his manner that things were different now and that the old footing existed no longer, but Peter was remarkably obtuse. As long as Ruth received him kindly he came, and Ruth continued to



for her own sake, and, well-perhaps a tiny bit for his sake, too. It would help to consolidate his position. He did not acknowledge this to himself, but the motive was there. Though he could never be anything

receive him kindly. And what made Ruth's kindness all the more galling to Arnold was the fact that when first success came to him, when they moved from the poky little house in Putney to this large home in Surrey, when people of a class she had never met before began to frequent the house and obviously to admire her, she had to all intents and purposes given Peter his dismissal. She had ignored him whenever he came, and gradually he had ceased to come. Then—quite suddenly—their estrangement was over and Peter again began to visit her regularly. The cause of their reconciliation had perhaps given Arnold as much annoyance as the fact of it. It was an absurd mongrel puppy called Micky that Peter had given to Ruth in the old days of the poky little home in Putney. Ruth was devoted to the dog. And, just when the new circle into which Arnold's success bore him was ready to accept and admire her, when the publisher's son was sending her flowers and the baronet's son was patently trying to meet her again and Arnold, watching proudly, felt new ambitions stir in his heart -Micky got lost. Ruth was quite absurdly upset by the affair. She sent for Peter, and Peter recovered the mongrel from a distant police station and—returned to favour. The whole affair had irritated Arnold—the losing of Micky, Ruth's utterly disproportionate unhappiness over it, and Peter's return to favour. Peter had even come to him last week definitely asking to be accepted as Ruth's future husband. Arnold prided himself upon never losing that half-whimsical poise which formed a great part of his charm, and he had not lost it then. He had treated Peter in a fatherly, almost affectionate fashion. He had showed himself good-humouredly amused by the whole concern. He had told him that both of them were far too young for an official engagement. He had hinted that it was a boy and girl affair which it would be absurd to take seriously. He had put his hand on Peter's shoulder and told him that he had his way to make in the world yet, and it was time enough to think of marrying a wife when he had a position to offer her. He had not actually said so—he had said nothing even that could actually be translated to mean it-but his attitude had conveyed to Peter that Ruth's position had changed, and that though Peter might have been a suitable husband for Ruth a year ago, he could no longer be considered in that light. The question of the engagement had not been broached again, but Peter continued to come to the house and Ruth continued to receive him.

Arnold stood at the window still watching them keenly, and frowning. Ruth lay in

the hammock, Peter on the grass beneath, and that absurd animal Micky played between them. . . .

Footsteps again down the passage. . . . They stopped at his door and then someone knocked on the little antique brass knocker. He had put that up about a month ago. He had not meant it as a hint to Margaret to knock before she entered his study, but she seemed to have accepted it as such. She had always since then knocked before she entered. He had thought of telling her not to and then had reconsidered it. Perhaps it was better so—now. He might be busy, he might be absorbed in a train of thought and not wish to be disturbed. And, after all, this new study of his was not a family sitting-room as the old one had been. It was his private study. And so Margaret, who had flitted in and out of his room like a shadow in the Putney days, always now knocked the little brass knocker before she entered.

She opened the door immediately on his "Come in." She was a pale, slight woman —the sort of woman whom you might hardly notice at the first meeting. At the second you would perhaps just notice her. After the third you would begin to look for her . . . She did not expand and become confidential on closer acquaintance. She was always calm and gentle and withdrawn. She spoke very little. There was about her, despite her slightness and lack of conversation, a curious dignity, and behind it a hint of buried sweetness. Her husband, in the days before his success, had known nothing of her but that poignant hidden sweetness, adoring and adorable, that underlay her mask of dignified reserve. He had cared nothing for the mask. Now he appreciated the mask as he had never done before. It became her new position as mistress of this large house. It became her position as hostess to his friends. It became her position as wife of a famous novelist. It obtruded no personality, discordant or otherwise; it did not challenge curiosity or interest. There was, after all, no room for any other personality in this new house than his. his new appreciation of her mask of reserve he did not notice whether or no her inner sweetness was being withdrawn from him. He did not need the comfort of her sweetness any longer. He had worshipped her in the old days. Had you asked him, he would have told you that he worshipped her still and he would have believed it.

She entered, stood a minute in the door-

way, and looked about her. His eye—sensitive to artistic effects—took in with appreciation the clear-cut pallor of her face, with that suggestion of fineness and serenity which lay chiefly in her level grey eyes and exquisitely curved lips.

"I'm sending the order up to the Stores," she said. "I came to see if there was anything

you wanted."

"Nothing, thank you," he said pleasantly.
"Is there anything I can do for you?"
she continued. "Could I answer any of your
letters for you?"

His eye went to the little pile of letters on the desk. They were the letters from admirers, women most of them. He enjoyed answering these letters. With some of his unknown admirers he kept up quite a brisk correspondence. He liked to think that they welcomed his letters, treasured them, showed them to their friends, even preserved them carefully as heirlooms.

"No, thank you," he replied. "I'll do those myself." Then he turned to the window and said abruptly:

"I see Peter's here again."

" Yes."

Her voice was detached, non-committal. He glanced at her. One could never tell from her face what she was feeling. Or rather he had lost the knack of it.

"I think that young man should be made clearly to understand that he mustn't come here," he said, trying to mask his secret irritation beneath a lightly whimsical manner.

She was silent for a few minutes, then said in the same detached, non-committal manner:

"He's working very hard now. He's not here much."

"He seems to be here a good deal," he said.

Again she was silent, then said suddenly: "I like Peter."

There was some emotion in her voice, but he couldn't quite tell what it was. He felt unduly exasperated and went over to his desk without answering. She stood at the window, looking down dreamily, unseeingly, at the garden below.

The manuscript on which he was working lay on his desk. He had written only the first two chapters. He should have done far more, of course, but his new acquaintances, his fresh interests, his increasing social obligations, his letters to his unknown admirers, had taken up so much of his time. He looked from it to his wife, still standing motionless there by the window. He had

always before given his manuscripts to her to read chapter by chapter as he wrote them, and always her approval had given him inspiration and encouragement to proceed. He had not meant to ask her to look at this one. He thought that now success had come to him he was independent of her praise and encouragement, but suddenly he felt a desire to hear her praise it. The sudden irritation caused by her last remark had faded.

"Would you like to read what I've done so far of 'The Reprieve'?" he said care-

lessly.

"Thank you," she said. He moved a chair for her.

"Sit down here."

It struck him suddenly that they were talking to each other as strangers, and again the wave of irritation swept over him. He handed her the manuscript. She began to read in silence. He walked over to the window and stared down at the garden, frowning, drumming his fingers absently on the window-ledge. Peter and Ruth were playing "catch" with a tennis ball, throwing it from the hammock where Ruth was to the grass where Peter was. They looked very happy and very young. Micky leapt about in absurd and ineffectual attempts to reach the ball. He turned and looked at Margaret again. He thought of all the times he had waited at this moment in breathless suspense for her verdict. Now it was different, of course. He did not need her verdict. The critics had assured him often in this last year that he could not write a word that was not distinguished, that every character he touched became illuminated. He had given it to her to read merely as a form of courtesy-and, of course, her praise would please him, as the praise of any intelligent woman would please him. Yet he was conscious, illogically enough, of a certain tension as he awaited her verdict. She laid the manuscript aside.

"Well?" He tried to speak lightly. He realised suddenly, with something of surprise, that after all he did need her approval.

Her grey eyes met his levelly.

"Well?" he said again.

"You've never written anything like this before, Arnold," she said slowly.

"Haven't I?" he said, with a touch—the slightest touch—of complacence in his manner. "No—I believe it does break fresh ground."

"It's ordinary—banal," she said. "It

doesn't live-it's undistinguished."

At first he couldn't believe his ears. The

blood rushed to his head. He'd never have believed a minute ago that he'd have cared so terribly to hear her condemn his work. It had never occurred to him even as a remote possibility that she would condemn it. Occasionally, before, she had made slight criticisms, and he had welcomed them eagerly and had discussed them with her at length. But this—"banal," "ordinary," "undistinguished." His anger was almost uncontrollable. He felt outraged—how dare she? He was trembling slightly and he could feel that his cheeks were flushed. He controlled himself with an effort and said evenly:

"I'm sorry you don't like it." He put out his hand for the manuscript and replaced it on the desk. He could not ask her what parts particularly had struck her

as-what was it?-" banal."

"I may have put it baldly," she said. "I'm sorry."

He had himself well in hand now.

"Why should you be?" he said courteously. "I wanted you, of course, to tell me exactly what you thought of it."

They were hundreds and hundreds of miles apart from each other. They were speaking to each other across an infinity of space. He had a sudden chill sensation of loneliness. He had never felt lonely before. He had had her and his work. It was as if both had suddenly failed him. Then he recovered himself. His work was good. Everyone said it was. Nothing that he wrote could be "banal" — "undistinguished." could not appreciate it. He had risen above That was what it was. His work had reached a plane where it was unintelligible to her. She was not, of course, a particularly well-educated or intellectual woman. He would never again consult her about his work. Her criticism had been an insult to him. He tried to feel humorously compassionate towards her because she had shown herself so pitifully inadequate. But he couldn't. He could only feel bitterly hurt and angry.

She rose and went towards the door.

"If there's nothing more I can do——" she said uncertainly, then, "Will you be in to dinner?"

"No-I'm going out."

The door closed softly behind her. He was alone again. He must go to change soon so as to be in time for Lady Ranger's dinnerparty. He was to be the guest of honour. He tried to drown his hurt and anger in the thought of that. There would be women far more beautiful and intellectual than

Margaret there to hang on his phrases, flatter him subtly, quote from his books (the subtlest flattery an author can receive), and pour their adulation at his feet.

Almost against his will he took up the manuscript that lay on the table and tried to read it, critically, impersonally. It was perhaps in a slightly different vein from his other books. Yes-that was it-it was in a slightly different vein-probably better than his other books. Of course, a writer could not keep up the same style throughout his career. It would become monotonous. And—he was frowning as he read—perhaps it was a trifle—just a trifle—patchy. He'd had such a lot of social calls upon him since he began it; he'd had so much less time to give to his work than he'd had in the old days. When the patchy effect was eliminated it would be—he was sure it would be the best book he had ever written. He had made up his mind before he began it that it should be the best book he had ever written. In a different vein, of course—that was all. Poor Margaret. She was so used to his old style she couldn't realise that he must develop. Develop—that was it.

Another knock at his door.

"Come in."

It was Ruth. She stood, slim and tall and beautiful, in the doorway. Ruth was no wistful girlish beauty. She looked firm and gallant and poised and full of courage. She met your gaze levelly. He had never once known her to be frightened of anything.

He had always been on good terms with his children, always prided himself on being on good terms with them. He had treated them always with gentleness and understanding and that whimsical charm on which I may have seemed to insist too much, but which was so essentially the man. His children all adored him. But Ruth had always been his favourite.

"Sit down and talk to me," he said. "I've not seen much of you lately. I'm such a busy man nowadays. How are you getting on?"

But she did not respond. He had a strange sensation of being miles and miles away from her—just as he had had with Margaret. Ruth had always been so quick to respond to his moods, had always been such an intelligent, adoring little daughter. She ought to have been putting her arm through his and laying her head on his shoulder and saying, "Daddy, you're wonderful—we're all so proud of you," and she

wasn't. She was standing facing him, looking at him defiantly.

"I want to speak to you about Peter,"

He was still kindly, humorous, tolerant, despite the secret annoyance at his heart.

Oh, yes, the devoted boy Peter?

troubadour. What about Peter?" "He came to speak to you last week and he didn't get much satisfaction."

He made an effort to recover their usual

relationships.

"Ruthie, you're only a little girl. Don't bother about things like that. Have Peter days of poverty when he might have been expected to know it.)

As he spoke he made a tentative movement with his right arm as if to encircle her. She evaded it.

"It's not that," she said stonily; "it's that you don't think Peter's good enough for us-now."

He flushed.

"That's rather crudely put, my dear,"

he said quietly.

"I'm sorry," she said, "I am crude. You see, I'm in love with Peter and Peter's in love with me."



"She looked firm and gallant and poised and full of courage."

for your friend if you like. It's too early to be talking of engagements and marriages."

I'm eighteen. I want to be engaged to

Peter. Eighteen isn't too young."

"Don't you want to enjoy life for a bit before you settle down?"

"I can enjoy life with Peter."

"I want you here a little longer," he said. "I don't want you to run away with any young man." (He would never have admitted, of course, even to himself, that he was still conscious of that strange dragging sensation of loneliness—the stranger because he had never known it in the old cramped

He recovered himself and began to speak urgently, as if trying to persuade himself as well as her that he was right.

"You're not in a position to know whom you're in love with. You've no experience, no knowledge of men or the world. Many a girl has made the fatal mistake of marrying the first personable young man she's met and bitterly regretted it. You may blame me now for not allowing this engagement, but you'll thank me one day."

"What have you against Peter?"

"Nothing—except that he is not in a position to support you in comfort."

"So it is that."

He ignored the accusation in her voice and continued:

"When you're of age you may marry whom you like, of course. It's only two and a half years."

She looked at him. Her eyes were grey

and steady like Margaret's.

"I've always sworn to myself," she said slowly, "that I'll never marry a man you don't want me to, and I won't."

Her words touched him deeply, recalling as they did the intimate trust that had existed between them before success had left him so little time for his own family, but her attitude and tone were cold and defiant. He shrugged his shoulders. He felt suddenly tired.

"So you won't let me marry Peter now?"

she persisted.

"For your own good, my dear—no. In a year, say, Peter will probably be the last man in the world you'll want to marry."

She looked at him for a minute in silence,

then went out without response.

He felt more hurt and annoyed than he ever remembered feeling before in his life.

But it was late—he must go and change for Lady Ranger's.

He inserted his latch-key into the front door and opened it slowly. He expected to find the house in darkness. Margaret never sat up for him now, and the children would have been in bed long ago. The evening had been a success. He had been "lionised " to his-to anyone's-heart's content. Again he would not have admitted to himself that beneath the pleasure he had so determinedly derived from the evening was still that vague nagging pain at his heart. It was so absurd to feel—lonely. He had more friends than he had ever had before in his life. He shut the front door quietly, then turned sharply. His wife was in the hall. With surprise he noticed his younger son and daughter in their dressing-gowns at the top of the stairs, watching.

"You shouldn't have stayed up, Mar-

garet," he began.

"Do you know anything about Ruth?" she said.

His heart missed a beat.

"Ruth?" he repeated.

"She went out soon after you'd gone and hasn't come back yet."

"Good heavens-it's after twelve."

"I know."

"Where did she say she was going?"

"She said she was going over to see the Bentleys."

"Have you rung them up?"

"Yes. They said she called and set off to walk home through the woods about halfpast six."

"Only a mile or two—and it's past twelve—why on earth didn't you let me know

sooner?"

"I've been trying to get into touch with you. I didn't know where you'd gone. You'd told me, I suppose, but I'd forgotten. My last hope was that perhaps she'd gone to meet you."

"Have you rung up the police?"

"Yes. They're searching the woods. They've got men."

"She might have missed her way."

"Yes."

" Peter ? "

"I can't get into touch with Peter. He's

gone North on business."

"If she's gone with him . . ." He clenched his fists. The perspiration stood out on his brow.

"If it's nothing worse than that---" said

his wife.

"I'll go out and help look-"

"No, don't. Stay here. You can't do anything to help." She looked up at the

watching boy and girl.

"Go to bed again, children—that's the best way you can help. There's a fire in your study, Arnold." He followed her there. His anxiety was like a sharp pain in the pit of his stomach. Ruth. . . . He sat in his arm-chair and stared into the fire, his head bowed. His wife stood at the window, twisting and untwisting her thin fingers.

Ruth—Ruth, lost in the woods—Ruth. hurt—one read of such damnable things in the papers—his bright fearless Ruth. Suddenly, irrelevantly, came the vision of himself a few hours ago sitting at Lady Ranger's brightly-lit table, complacently drinking in flattery, smiling smugly, flirting discreetly with women who were past-masters in the art of tickling a vain man's vanity. He recoiled from the vision in disgust . . . it made him sick. At that very time perhaps Ruth had been calling out for him in terror. He realised suddenly that they were all he cared for in the whole world—Margaret, Ruth, Molly, Teddie—and he'd let them go. He'd been a sickening, swollen-headed fool -a fool. Perhaps he'd driven Ruth to some rash act by his lack of sympathy that very evening, by sneering at Peter-her Peter, the best young fellow in the world. His anxiety was more than he could bear. Ruthie—his little girl—Margaret's little girl. His thoughts went back to the night of her birth. He had felt then that he must die if Margaret were taken from him. . . . Ruthie as a little girl, adorable, gallant, fearless. They had been so proud of her, he and Margaret. He looked across to the window where Margaret stood gazing away from him, still twisting her fingers.

"Don't worry, Margaret," he said

hoarsely.

"Oh no," she said in a faint, far-away

voice.

"She'll be all right—just lost—they'll find her." He had a sudden memory of an occasion many years ago when Teddie had been lost. He and Margaret had clung together for comfort then; he'd held her tightly in his arms in the little shabby study-sitting-room of their povertystricken days. He looked across at her again and realised with a dull agony of his heart that he couldn't take her in his arms now. He'd lost the knack of it. grown too far away from each other. They'd been polite and distant to each other for so long. He longed to comfort her—he longed for her comfort—and barriers impregnable, unscalable, were between them.

Ruthie—the dull weight of misery at his heart was more than he could bear. He looked round the room—so full of evidence of his success and wealth—and suddenly he hated it all, hated every mannered ornament of it, every subtle, complacent suggestion of his position that it contained. He would have given his soul to be back with her in the little shabby study-sitting-room, comforting her—as on the night when Teddie was lost. Ruthie . . . Ruthie. He went hot with shame. He'd tried to make Ruthie the vulgar snob he was himself, he'd tried to take her boy lover from her. He saw himself at that moment as a conceited, posturing mountebank, exploiting his every personal trait to increase the sales of his books, using even that ridiculous humility of his as a rung in the ladder by which he was climbing to fame—to a fame which was barren, unsatisfying, cloying, which had lost him his wife's and children's love and respect. He felt sick with shame and misery. eyes fell on the manuscript upon the desk. His heart had known ever since Margaret had said the words that it really was "banal," "undistinguished." He had never felt any real interest in it. He had been too

much interested in his own success. With a sudden movement he took it up and thrust it into the fire. Margaret turned round. The mass of papers smouldered slowly, then blazed up the chimney.

"Why did you do that?" she asked.

"You said it was—undistinguished, banal."

"Yes, but you didn't believe me. You thought that it was only that I couldn't appreciate it."

She came nearer, hovering about his desk. "I believed it in my heart," he said

unsteadily.

They stood up and looked at each other in silence. Both their faces were drawn and haggard with anxiety. Suddenly he made an unsteady movement towards her.

"Margaret," he said brokenly. And in a second—miraculously—the barriers were down—they were clinging to each other as they had done in the shabby study-sitting-room in the old days, when Teddie was lost. Both of them were crying.

And just then came the sound of the opening of the front door and the sound of voices—and one of the voices was Ruth's.

He waited in his study till she came down again from putting Ruth to bed. Ruth, who was tired, had told her story shortly and then gone up with Margaret. She had lost her way in the wood and then had suddenly begun to feel faint. She had managed to find her way to a cottage whose only occupant had been a very old woman, had stayed there till she felt well enough to go on, then had set out again to try to find her way home, and had fallen in with the rescue party.

Margaret came down, sat in the chair by his fire and looked up at him where he stood on the hearthrug. The shadow was gone. Her eyes were clear and trustful and happy, as they had been in the old days. He looked round the room, then he gathered up the invitation cards and letters that lay about the room and threw them in a heap into the fire.

"I've been a sickening ass," he said, "but you know all about it—you've always known all about everything. You're all that I want—all. You know that, don't you?"

" Yes."

"To-night—I wanted you so terribly and—you seemed to have gone so far away."

"I hadn't. I was there all the time. Only waiting till you knew you wanted me."

"You're all I want in the world—you and the old days back."

"You can't have those," she said, smiling.

"You're famous—you can't help it."

"But we'll be the same," he said confidently. "I've learnt my lesson. I shall never need to learn it again. And—you'll never let me go again, will you?"

" Never—never—never."

\* \* \* \* \*

He was passing the girls' room the next morning, when the sound of Ruthie's voice arrested him.

"I wasn't really lost, you know, Molly."

"Weren't you?"

"No—I knew just where I was all the time. Once I had an awfully narrow escape from being found by the rescue party before I wanted to be."

"Oh, Ruthie-why ever?"

"Well, have you noticed that since we got rich and came to this house things haven't been quite as jolly?"

"Yes-in a way."

"And had you noticed that Daddy was beginning not to have much use for Mums?"

" Yes."

"I had, too, and it made me wretched. And do you know, when first we moved here and could have such a lot of posh things and got to know such a lot of posh people, I got a bit swelled-headed, too." The listener winced at the "too."

"I began to think that I was too good for Peter till that night Micky was lost, and then I felt so anxious and wretched and I didn't care a bit about any of the posh things or people. I only wanted Peter. It gave me a sort of jerk. So I thought that perhaps it might give Dad and Mum a sort of jerk if I got lost. So I got lost. Do you see? And—I think it's been a success."

Arnold walked downstairs, his face twisted into a rueful smile. After all, it is not very pleasant to learn that one has been made a fool of. But he was a sportsman at heart. He could take his medicine without pulling a face over it. Ruthie was a little minx—but she'd given him back something very, very precious that he'd nearly lost. His heart was still light.

"Hello, Daddy!"

She leapt downstairs behind him and joined him in the hall, slipping her arm through his. She was quite unaware that he had overheard her.

"Where are you going, Daddy?"

"Out for the day with your Mother. You'd better ring up Peter and ask him to dinner and fix up the great event."

"Oh, Daddy!" Then, after a short silence, "Daddy, generally speaking, do you think that the end justifies the means?"

He laughed. "I think so," he said.

#### THE HUMAN FLOOD.

WE are but billows breaking
Upon the shore of Time,
Monotonously making
Our unremembered rhyme.

Life is a vast commotion,
Alternate strife to reach,
Now unknown gulfs of ocean,
And now a glittering beach.

At first the heaving splendour,
The shock, the exultant foam,
And then what sad surrender!
A sigh, a turning home.

We are swayed by a power that ranges On high, and darkling trace A sickle that somehow changes To the likeness of a face.

THOMAS SHARP.

## THE CHAINS OF A • • TITAN • •

### By LIEUT.-COLONEL GORDON • CASSERLY •

Author of "In the Green Jungle," "Dwellers in the Jungle," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY DOUGLAS CONSTABLE

ITH sharp-hoofed forefoot a dark-hided sambhur stag struck the face of the white cliff with which a landslide had scarred the green hollow among the Himalayan foothills. At the blows clods of chalk-like clay fell to the ground and the big animal, lowering its head, ate them greedily; while a small barking deer, a buck with bright bay coat and small horns curving in towards each other, pushed in to share the shattered fragments, deftly dodging the angry thrusts of the sambhur's antlers when the greedy bully tried to drive it away.

Beside them were a group of wild pigs, the black boar gouging the cliff face with his tusks, his family of five or six sows and young ones scrambling for the chunks of white earth that he dug out. Two cow bison with a half-grown calf and a graceful, slim-legged cheetul stag and two hinds with dappled skins were cating the clay, too. It was a strange sight to see the line of varied beasts devouring the extraordinary meal with evident enjoyment. But the cliff was a "salt-lick," a spot where the uncovered soil was strongly impregnated with natron, soda or some mineral salt that made it palatable to most of the animals inhabiting this Indian jungle.

The hollow was deep and cup-like, a natural amphitheatre entered by a steep-banked passage so narrow that the great mammoth that now heaved his big bulk into sight in it filled it from side to side and blocked it up. He was an elephant, a huge bull with a pair of rounded white tusks six feet long curving up and outward gracefully from the upper jaws. A veritable Titan, standing nearly ten feet at the shoulder, his barrel deep and of great girth, his legs

thick, though short, and bulging in front with muscle.

At his sudden appearance all the other animals in the hollow swung round instantly in swift apprehension, ready to fight for their lives or flee, for fear rules the world of the jungle. But when they saw the new-comer and realised that he was not dangerous to them, they turned to the cliff and began to eat again, while the elephant lumbered up heavily but noiselessly to join in the strange feast. Driving his strong tusks into the cliff, he dug out great lumps of clay, which fell to the ground and broke into pieces. At once the little barking deer tripped impertinently up beside him. and fearlessly snatched coveted morsels of the salty earth almost from the Titan's mouth; while two of the piglings, deserting their family group, boldly followed its example. The good-tempered big animal permitted their presence and their thieving, and with the gentleness of his race was careful not to harm them in his movements.

While he was eating the sambhur stag left the amphitheatre, approaching the exit with great caution, sniffing the air with muzzle uplifted and, suddenly sensing a hostile smell, bolting swiftly through the narrow and dangerous defile with horns laid back on its shoulders. And a yellowskinned panther, which was hiding on the steep hillside above the passage, watched its going resignedly, knowing that it was too big a prey to tackle. He was waiting to pounce on some smaller beast. The alluring scent of the young pigs came tantalizingly on the heated air; but the stronger smell of the boar was carried to him with it, and warned him that it would be dangerous to attack them. The panther was not full grown and knew well how formidable a foe a wild boar could be.

The barking deer was more his measure; and he crawled forward cautiously on his belly until he could look down into the green cup and make sure that the coveted prey was still there. When it passed below him on its way out he could leap down on it from the almost precipitous slope of the hillside that banked the narrow alley; and with every muscle tense under the blackdotted yellow skin he crouched ready to spring when he saw the little animal turn away replete from the cliff and look towards the opening. But it hesitated to move; and the hungry young panther quivered with impatience when it sniffed the air suspiciously and still delayed its going.

The pigs, satisfied too, pattered fearlessly through the dangerous defile, calmly confident in the corrage and strength of the black boar that led them out, stopping and letting them pass him in order to assure himself that all were safe. Their example heartened the barking deer, which started to follow them : and the panther crept still further forward in order to jump down on it as it passed. But quick eye, ear or nose suddenly detected the lurking murderer: and the buck uttered a loud, sonorous cry of alarm, the dog-like bark that gives these deer their name. All the beasts of the jungle know its meaning; and instantly those still feeding at the salt-lick swung round from the cliff face, muzzles uplifted to scent the danger.

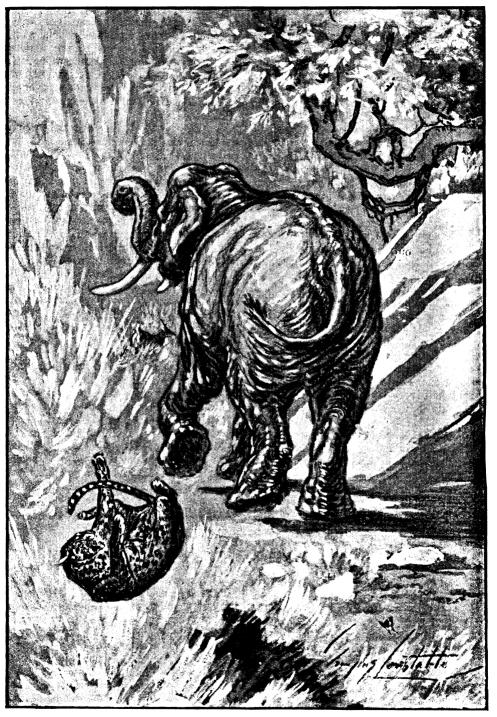
The exasperated panther, furious at being detected, rose up, half resolved to spring down into the cup and attack his prey openly. But the sight of the elephant restrained him; for he feared lest the great tusker might resent his intrusion. Indeed, the Titan had turned about, disquieted by the alarm, had stopped eating and, with his mouth full of white clay, lifted his trunk into the air and, stretching it out, pointed it in every direction until he had located the beast of prey. Then lowering it he rapped the tip several times on the ground, blowing out a current of air through it in blasts as he did so, which made a strange metallic shricking, the elephant's scream of apprehension and alarm. The sound was too much for the panther's nerves; and he crouched and drew back, but with eyes still fixed on the barking deer.

The disturbance seemed to spoil the tusker's appetite; and, grumbling deep down in his throat, he lumbered with lurching stride towards the defile. The little buck saw a way of escape and tripped alongside him, keeping the great body between itself and the lurking danger. But the passage was only wide enough to let the elephant squeeze through alone; and the panther crept forward hopefully again, calculating on the buck's being forced to fall behind in the narrow alley. But when the tusker came to where his sides actually brushed both banks of the defile the impudent little buck dived underneath his stomach and, thus hidden, walked out safely, while the baulked panther raged powerlessly above.

Where the passage widened the deer came out from under the big body and dashed away exultantly through the undergrowth. The disappointed beast of prey, springing down to pursue it, blundered against the elephant, which, with a shrill trumpet of rage, kicked him violently away and sent him rolling over and over with a broken rib and the breath knocked out of him. Paying no further attention to him, the mammoth lurched on slowly through the jungle, breaking off branches and pulling down creepers as he went along to cram them into his mouth with his trunk. which from time to time he stretched out to catch the scent of the herd from which he had wandered away a couple of days before.

He followed a well-defined track made by the constant passing of others of his race, a path winding between great boles of sal trees and avoiding the densest undergrowth and the worst parts of the tangled network of thick lianas festooned from the higher branches and presenting an obstacle to the passage of even so powerful a monster as he. He loitered on his way, feeding as he went; for he was in no hurry, knowing that those he sought were not far off and, as the morning was far advanced, would soon be halting for their noontide rest.

A mile or two ahead of him lay a small clearing in the forest, where the tall undergrowth of interlaced, thorny bushes was replaced by long grass and high bracken. It looked like a glade in an old English wood, although the outspreading boughs of the great trees shading it were matted thick with the glossy green leaves of orchids with long dependent trails of beautiful mauve and white blossoms. And breast-high in the giant ferns was a group of ten or twelve wild elephants, some standing half asleep in the deepest shade, others sweeping up



"Kicked him violently away and sent him rolling over and over with a broken rib and the breath knocked out of him."

swathes of grass with their trunks to thrust it into their mouths.

Most of them were females, some with newly-born calves three feet high nuzzling at their breasts, while older ones played together clumsily or varied a milk diet with an occasional mouthful of grass filched from their elders. One, about a year old, with the white tusks beginning to push out from his upper jaw, was boldly helping himself to the leaves of a heap of broken branches piled in front of a very ancient elephant. This patriarch, the ancestor of all the group, was nearly a hundred and fifty years old and had all but reached the span of life allotted by Nature to these great animals. He looked his age; for his head was lean and fleshless, his eyes and temples sunken, his ears ragged, their lower edges much torn and upper well lapped over, while his skin was shiny and shrivelled and his legs thin and devoid of muscle.

Near him grazed a fully-grown male elephant without tusks, a muckna, as these abnormal and rare animals are called, a big but nervous and apprehensive beast; for, lacking his natural weapons, he was too frequently bullied and ill-treated by others of his sex better armed. Even the females did not hesitate to hustle him out of their way if he chanced to approach their calves; for they had ivory tushes three inches long growing down from their upper jaws and could use them to inflict a nasty wound. And these ladies were not as peaceable as they looked; for not only were they more dangerous than bull-elephants in defence of their young, but they also often quarrelled fiercely among themselves, as was evidenced by the fact that some of them lacked the greater part of their tails—bitten off by their sisters in feminine disputes.

Although all seemed peaceful at the moment, the muckna was nevertheless evidently ill at ease, frequently pausing as he ate to listen and looking about apprehensively at any noise. The sudden crow of a jungle cock, the whir of the rapidly flapping wings of a pair of gaudy-coloured hornbills flying above the trees, made him start nervously. And yet he was taken unawares when the tall undergrowth near him was parted noiselessly and a tusker elephant stole out of it and approached him without a sound.

It had almost reached him when a dry stick cracked under its feet; and the alarmed muckna swung round just in time to avoid being gored by the long sharp tusks of the new-comer, which, seeing that it was dis-

covered, made a sudden rush at him. With a scream of terror he plunged into the dense bushes and crashed madly away; while the stranger, letting him go, turned towards the cow-elephants, which, at the muckna's cry, had stopped feeding and were now looking inquiringly at the intruding male. Apparently they recognised him, for most of them began to eat again; although one or two of the younger ones still gazed at him.

He was a young bull from another family of the main herd, one which had been driven away from it by the jealous older animal that led it. For weeks he had been hovering near this group, taking advantage of the Titan's frequent wanderings to try to gain the favour of the females and remorselessly bullying the unarmed or feebler males. He invariably disappeared when the absent leader returned, for he lacked the courage to stand up against him in fair fight for the leadership of the clan.

A few of the giddier young females were not insensible to his advances. These were watching him now admiringly as he boastfully displayed his courage to attract them. The *muckna* having fled, he turned his attention to the one big male elephant left in the party, the old patriarch which, blissfully unconscious of him, was feeding peacefully. The intruder moved to him and began to molest him.

The decrepit beast tried to shamble away from the unprovoked attack; but the bully followed and prodded him with his tusks. Before one vigorous thrust the wretched ancient stumbled on to his knees and was promptly kicked and pounded until he fell over on to his side. His assailant drew off and the poor old patriarch struggled to rise; but just as he had almost succeeded in getting on to his feet, the vicious brute charged him and hurled him violently to the ground with a deep wound in his shoulder from his attacker's thrust.

Exulting in the shameful victory, the coward stood triumphantly over him, but a sudden crashing through the undergrowth startled him—and with a fierce trumpet of rage the Titan dashed out into the open. The bully drew back irresolutely and would have bolted; but there was no escape, and with a frenzy of fear that lent him a temporary courage he turned to face the angry lord of the group.

At first sight the two opponents looked fairly well matched; for there was little difference in their height or in the length of their tusks. But as the Titan, seeing that his challenge was accepted, halted for a moment and prepared to attack with proper caution, it could easily be seen that he was much the finer animal. For he was a true Koomeriah, that is, a natural thoroughbred, with nearly all the best points that a first-class elephant should He stood higher on the forelegs than behind, his straight, flat back sloped down from shoulder to tail, his head and chest were massive, his neck short and thick, his eyes full, bright and intelligent, his trunk thick and heavy, his tail long and well feathered; and his whole appearance bespoke courage as well as strength.

The other was a typical Meerga, or thirdrate elephant, weedy, lank and leggy, with a long, lean neck and an arched back, his head small and his eyes vicious and restless. But his long legs and his light body promised

speed and agility.

The Titan began to circle about his antagonist, seeking an opening to attack with his tusks, while the other swung round to keep his head always towards the challenger, who at last, losing patience, charged at him with trunk curled up out of harm's way, ears cocked and tail uplifted. The two great skulls clashed together, forehead to forehead; and the shock was so great that the younger elephant was borne back violently almost on his haunches. his agility saved him, and he contrived to swing his hind-quarters round and turn to avoid the pressure. He drew back, disentangling his tusks from his enemy's, and with a quick rush tried to sink them in the Titan's exposed side.

But the latter, although heavier and less active, was a skilled fighter and turned quickly, meeting the charge squarely head on; and with their sharp ivory weapons locked again, the two great beasts pushed each other with might and main, straining on slanted legs, their feet pressed hard against the trampled earth, all their weight flung forward. Each strove to force the other back and down.

The grim struggle lasted several minutes; but the Titan's strength told in the end and slowly, yet surely, he was bearing his adversary back, when again the Meerga disengaged himself by an adroit movement. But not quickly enough to escape the point of the other's right tusk, which gashed his side from shoulder to haunch. The pain of the wound unnerved him, terror seized him, and in wild fear he bolted across

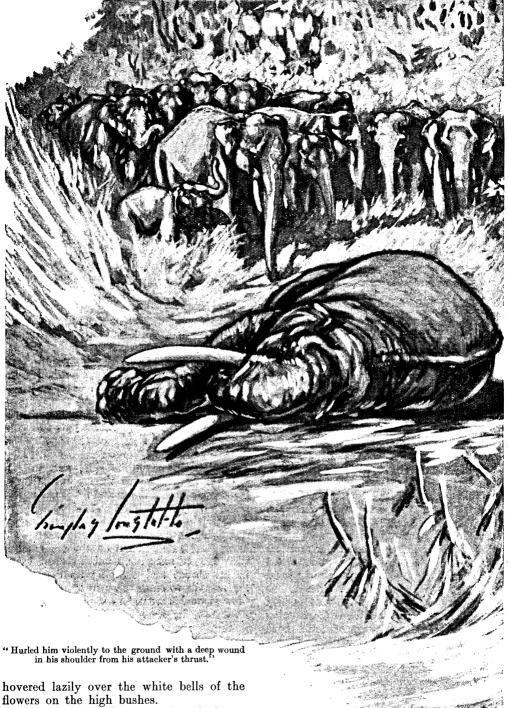
the glade and plunged headlong into the jungle in cowardly flight. The crashing sounds of his mad passage through the undergrowth soon died away as he fled

far in panic.

The victor disdained to pursue him, but instead went over to where the bully's victim, the old patriarch, still lay helpless on the ground. He was the Titan's sire, supplanted by him in the headship of the clan. but so long ago that all sense of rivalry between them had died. Wild animals as a rule show little solicitude for any of their number stricken; but, like a dutiful son, the younger knelt down at his father's back and, pressing the base of his curled-up trunk under him, tried to lever him up on to his It was a long task; for the patriarch was too dazed by the shock of his fall to have strength left to help himself. But at last, trembling and shaken, he managed to stand upright again.

All through this scene, as during the fight, the cow-elephants had looked on unconcernedly; and now they began to eat again placidly, while the young calves, engrossed in their play or feeding, had been calmly unconscious of it all. The disturbance had delayed the usual noontide siesta of the elephants; and presently, one after another, they disposed themselves to sleep away the hottest hours of the day. The midday hush had fallen on the forest. Titan lay down on his side, and in his slumber from time to time automatically lifted his uppermost ear and let it fall again heavily with a noise like a pistol-shot. While some followed his example and took their rest lying, others dozed standing up, the babies prostrate under their mothers' bodies. Only the old ancestor, rumbling deep down in his throat and scraping up dust with his toenails to snuff it up in his trunk and blow it on his wound in order to keep the flies from it, remained awake. Although presently the curtains of the high undergrowth were cautiously parted and the muckna poked his head out and, seeing that his enemy had vanished, stole into the glade, soon even he fell asleep, but standing and awaking nervously again and again.

The silence of the jungle was profound. Even the drowsy hum of the insects seemed to die down; and the usually noisy monkeys in the tree-tops were quiet. Nothing stirred except a few green and blue long-tailed butterflies as large as a man's open hand, which had been swept down from the mountains by the morning breeze and now



In the early afternoon the elephants awoke and wandered about to feed again. Some swept up the grass, others broke off leafy branches, and holding them in their

leafy branches, and holding them in their trunks used them first to beat their sides and heads with to drive off the flies now worrying them and then thrust them into their mouths and chewed wood and leaves with relish. Some tore down the hanging creepers, dislodging showers of fierce big red ants which, falling on their backs, viciously bit through their soft, thick skin. The *muckna* stripped a slender tree of its lowest boughs, and then desirous of those



"There was no escape, and with a frenzy of fear that lent him a temporary courage he turned to face the angry lord of the group."

higher up, curled his trunk, put the base of it, a foot from his forehead, to the stem, leant his weight against it and pushed until the roots were torn out of the ground and the tree crashed down, bringing the coveted branches within his reach.

While they fed the elephants were scattered about, but never went very far away from each other. And on every side of them the noise of cracking boughs and creepers being dragged down indicated the near presence of other family groups making up the herd, which numbered nearly seventy animals. This movement and feeding went on until two hours before midnight, when all the elephants settled down to sleep.

About four o'clock in the morning they woke up; and as if by a concerted plan the various groups drew near each other, and, one leading, they began to move off steadily in a certain direction. The herd was changing its feeding ground and making for a favourite haunt to which it was in the habit of resorting at this season every year. It went by definite, if sometimes scarcely discernible, jungle tracks, across which young lianas swung and new vegetation had spread since animals had last used them.

In each party the cows with the youngest calves headed the line and set the pace for the rest, the bulls bringing up the rear; for if they led they would go too fast for the little legs of the babies, which would drop behind and, as the mothers would not desert them, the family would be broken up. Without actually joining, the groups followed each other close enough to form a column, and went forward slowly but steadily, the animals feeding as they proceeded. Most of them kept the line, snatching at the creepers, leaves or grass on their road, while others diverged at times from the path to make little excursions to one side or the other in search of food, always rejoining their party soon.

About ten o'clock in the morning the whole herd halted as if by order, the various groups preparing to settle down for the noontide meal and siesta. The mothers mostly contented themselves with the fodder on the spot where they happened to be, so that their calves could be fed and rest at once, the other cows and the males wandering off into the jungle to graze, but returning to the others to sleep.

In the afternoon the herd got on the move again and tramped along in the same leisurely way until about ten o'clock, when it halted for the night's repose. And thus day after day the column of the great animals proceeded to its destination with the same routine, the pace of the smallest and slowest determining the rate and the duration of the march. Except when the occasional strayers wandered off to right or left of the line of advance, the clders went in single

file, each stepping precisely into the footprints of the one preceding it; so that, but for the stragglers and the calves, the trail they left looked as if but one elephant had passed that way.

Once a broad and swift-flowing river was met with, barring their advance. The thirsty beasts waded joyfully into it, gratefully drank the cool water with the chill of the Himalayan snows still on it, and wallowed luxuriously in the shallows; while the cows, standing knee-deep, sucked it up to squirt a shower-bath over their protesting babies. Then when the herd swam across, the anxious mothers supported their youngest calves with their trunks, while their older ones climbed up on their backs and were thus ferried safely to the opposite bank.

For days the column marched in the green gloom under the forest giants, huge sal, simal and teak trees, which, bare of boughs for half their height, spread their upper branches in such profusion that they formed a canopy so thick that the blazing tropic sunshine could not filter through it. Occasionally the herd passed from the trees to stretches of such densely-growing tall canes that even these mammoths could only penetrate them by narrow paths made by others of their race when the plants were very young and kept open by their constant traffic. Here even the habitual stragglers were forced to keep in file. Sometimes the big trees gave place to patches of plumed, creaking bamboos or elephant grass twelve feet high with feathery tops six feet higher, in which the big beasts were utterly lost to sight.

At last the goal was reached, a particularly dense and shady part of the immense forest, a part that abounded in just the vegetation that they liked best, with a convenient river flowing between high and precipitous banks which in three or four places sloped down comfortably to the water's edge, so that they could easily reach it to drink and bathe. It was an ideal spot for a fairly lengthy stay; for the fodder available was abundant enough to supply even such voracious feeders as elephants for many days. Having reached its destination, the column at once broke up into its component parts, which scattered about the new feeding-ground. But no sooner had the herd arrived than two watchers, half-naked brown men, having counted its numbers, set off at a steady jog-trot along forest paths to report the fact to an anxious European miles away in a rough jungle-hut, one who had been waiting weary weeks for just this item of news.

One word of his brought hundreds of Indians running excitedly out from the shelter of grass-thatched temporary dwellings of boughs, reeds or split bamboos. And many tame elephants, with hindlegs chained to tree-trunks, lazily beating off the worrying flies with leafy branches held in their trunks, looked up expectantly as their attendants, a mahout or driver and a coolie to each one, came hurriedly towards them, released them from their fetters, bound great mattress-like pads stuffed with straw on their backs by girth-ropes, and bade them kneel to receive their loads. less than an hour the encampment of rudelybuilt huts was left to fall to pieces, and a snaky column of men and big animals wound in single file through the forest towards the part of the jungle in which the two watchers had located the herd.

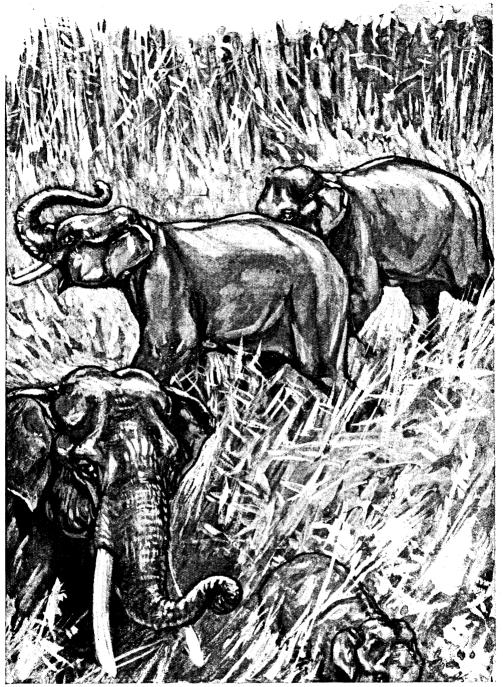
Little recking, poor beasts, that anyone designed evil to them, the wild elephants had settled down to enjoy their temporary paradise. They did not know that they had a commercial value, that human beings, having to toil for their own living, thought that animals should work too and be made to help them in the struggle for existence. The poor beasts had yet to learn that their great strength was not to be wasted, that it could be put to profitable account in bearing heavy burdens, hauling logs of timber, helping men to kill each other by carrying guns, ammunition and supplies in small but murderous frontier wars, or in exalting the great ones of the earth by raising high above the common herd viceroys and rajahs in state processions. For this they were to be deprived of their birthright to freedom; and against them came, if not "all the king's horses and all the king's men," at least a number of an emperor's tame elephants and of an emperor's men. For the Imperial Kheddah Establishment, a Government of India Department which exists to capture these great beasts and sell them in the open market, had sent this large party of trackers, noosers, pulwans, coolies and trained animals to catch some of the many wild elephants that people the immense Terai forest. And this particular herd was the first marked down.

Ignorant of what Fate had in store for them, the mammoths passed their days and nights in the usual pleasant routine of eating and sleeping. In the midst of plenty the Titan, confirmed wanderer as he was, was content for the present to remain with his harem, although sooner or later the boredom of placid family life would seize him, as it does so many wild tuskers, and drive him away to weeks of solitary roaming. And while he stayed he was watched all the time by the defeated Meerga, who still remained hopefully near the group, taking care that the lord of it never saw him. He was waiting until the usual fit of restlessness should seize his enemy and give him another opportunity to intrude again.

Fate had decreed otherwise. When the elephant hunters had located the herd, they halted a mile from it; and half of the three hundred coolies of the band filed off to the right in pairs at intervals of fifty yards, the other half to the left, and moved on until the leaders of the two parties met beyond the herd, when all halted where they were and faced inwards, enclosing the animals within a circle of men in couples half a hundred paces or more apart. Working outwards, each pair quickly made a light railing of split bamboos towards their neighbours on either side, thus marking a definite ring around the herd, and then ran up shelters of leafy branches for themselves on the spot where they had halted. These marked the posts where the couples were to remain to guard against the elephants breaking out of the ring; and here their food was brought them and they were visited regularly to insure their wakefulness.

For a week the animals were thus hemmed in without the majority realising it. Occasionally a straying beast happened to approach the confining limits of the human fence, but the sudden appearance of the guarding coolies and their shouts, if it were daytime, and the even more effective blazing watchfires by night, scared them back again to the herd. A few which had already had experience of Man, wanderers and plunderers of the scanty crops in the patches of cultivation around jungle villages, like the Titan, and murderous "rogues," like the Meerga, which had causelessly stalked and killed inoffensive peasants in the forest, were not so easily frightened away. But for them a few shots fired in the air and, if these failed, a bullet from a big-bore muzzle-loading musket, were equally effective. The majority of the animals remained contentedly feeding and resting inside the imprisoning circle, most of them ignorant of its existence.

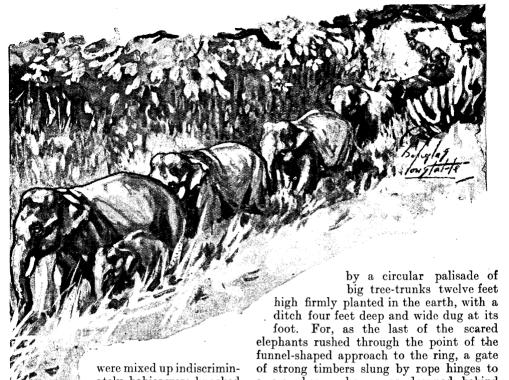
At last one morning all were forced to



" Except when the occasional strayers wandered off to right or left of the line of advance, the elders went in single file, each stepping precisely into the footprints of the one preceding it."

realise it; for the ring began to contract slowly and the men, shouting and striking tree-trunks with their sticks, closed in on them everywhere except at one point. The elephants, disliking the noise, drew together and instinctively moved in this direction. As they went the disturbers of their peace

came on quicker and quicker, their cries grew louder, guns were fired and the din became deafening. Panic seized the herd, and the animals bolted in a disorderly mob, all fleeing towards the one point that, from its quietness, seemed to offer a chance of escape. Big and small, bulls, cows and calves



ately, babies were knocked down and their mothers, striving to help them, were swept away from them by the rush of their terrified companions. The

Titan and the Meerga raced side by side with no thought of hatred and hostility.

Suddenly the leading elephants found their path rapidly contracting; for, as they burst through the hanging network of interlaced creepers and trampled down the dense undergrowth, the way out to either side was blocked by converging walls of stout timber uprights, forming a funnel down which they were thrust by the increasing pressure of their followers, frightened more than ever by volleys of gunshots behind them. It kept narrowing until they were wedged in two or three abreast. just as it seemed about to close altogether, it ended, and the leaders and the struggling mob behind them rushed gladly into freedom and, the noises ceasing, slowed down and spread themselves; while the anxious mothers forced their way through the rest to seek their calves.

But, although they did not know it until later, the whole herd, with the exception of a dozen that had managed to break out through the beaters before reaching the fatal bottle-neck, were prisoners in a space about fifty yards in diameter enclosed of strong timbers slung by rope hinges to a cross-beam above was dropped behind them and all were trapped.

At first, crowding together with a sense of mutual protection in their nearness, the herd did not discover the narrow limits of their prison. But, as hours passed and hunger forced them to separate and move about to feed, they soon came upon the confining wall. Some tried to break through it; but blank cartridges were fired at them, lighted torches were shoved between the uprights into their faces, and those who

persisted in attacking the timbers, although

hampered by the trench, were driven back

by spear-thrusts. At night a ring of fires blazed behind the palisade and daunted the most daring.

Next day the gate was lifted; and the wondering herd, huddling close in community of misery, saw twelve big elephants, with men astride their necks, enter the enclosure. At first the captives only stared at them in amazement. The Meerga chanced to be the nearest to the strangers and, illtemperedly resenting their presence, he moved aggressively towards them. He was promptly met, skull to skull, by a tall trained male which with superior courage and weight ran him backwards with interlocked tusks until, his craven heart failing him, the bully disengaged himself and bolted in terror round and round the prison, blundering blindly into his fellows.

Then with the light of battle in his eyes the Titan strode forward majestically to challenge the victor. But at once four great tuskers, each nearly as big and powerful as himself; closed in on him, front, sides and rear, and effectually immobilised him, despite his frantic attempts to break out and fight them all. Then, crowning ignominy! before he knew what was happening two men, skilled noosers, crept out from under the tame elephants and bound his hindlegs together with ropes, so that he could barely hobble. And while the same fate was

of the great forest in the changing seasons of the year.

Two years have passed. The scene changes. Down between the gaily coloured houses with veiled women peeping through the screened windows down on to a street in the chief town of a Native State far from the Terai Jungle, between salaaming crowds of shaven-crowned Hindu spectators, comes a stately procession. A troop of red-uniformed cavalry with steel breast-plates and helmets, riding desert-bred, screaming stallions with long manes and



"The elephant is the Titan, still fettered. But now the chains are of gold."

befalling his companions in turn, he was pushed and dragged helplessly out of the enclosure by the combined strength of his four guards and forced close to a huge tree. Then the ropes were quickly replaced by chains passing around the treetrunk and he was fastened up effectually. He struggled indignantly, and strained furiously at the fetters. But his chains were of good English steel; and even his giant strength was powerless against them. The Titan was a slave, never more to roam freely through the vast. dim aisles

tails dycd pink, heads it. Behind them moves with dignity a tall elephant covered with long, trailing housings of embroidered cloth of gold and bearing on his broad back a silver howdah in which sits a gorgeously robed rajah with ropes of pearls around his throat and a diamond worth a king's ransom in his turban. On either side of the beast walks a scarlet-clad groom holding the end of a massive chain that passes around the animal's neck.

The elephant is the Titan, still fettered. But now the chains are of gold.

## THE SHIELD OF ILLUSION •

#### By ROBERTSON CARFRAE

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

"LUMP of mud! O toad! O sleepy mud-turtle!" The voice of the chief's wife quivered with rage. "Here is a fine disaster come upon us by thy slow mock-cunning. Have thy wits, awash in pombe, yet grasped the message that has been brought?"

Dorindi drew himself up, though his legs trembled and his wispy beard twitched

uncertainly.

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"As the matter has reached me, it seems that our young warrior, B'Dono bin Mororo and a fine hunter, has performed some small service for Salim bin Abdullah, paramount chief of all the Waruli; wherefore he is rewarded. Is it a wonderment that a village ruled by myself should breed great hunters and brave men? Could it be otherwise? Stay thy clacking tongue, woman, or speak with sense!"

This bombastic speech failed utterly.

"O braggart! O monkey, chasing his tail while his enemy steals his food! O fool, admiring the nut-shell and forgetting the meat which fills it! The importance of the news escapes thee."

Dorindi signalled to the naked boy who squatted beside his jar of *pombe*. Time was gained while the seductive liquid trickled down his aged throat, but his wife was not

deceived.

"Listen, then, old half-wit!" she continued venomously. "Hast forgotten thy second daughter Evara? She is unmarried

and a handsome girl."

"A credit to her father," nodded Dorindi complacently. "She is betrothed to M'Pazo at a price of fifteen goats, all young and all fat, paid before the ceremony. I arranged the affair with skill and cunning, as befits a chief."

"Such as thou drive wise people mad! Knowest thou not that B'Dono bin Mororo desires her? And that she watches him

with admiration? Fat or lean, what are the goats of M'Pazo to the wealth of B'Dono since he saved the life of Salim bin Abdullah?"

"Wealth? Wealth?" Dorindi tottered forward, his mouth agape. "What is this tale of wealth, woman? Speak!"

His wife's voice dropped to a hissing whisper. "Salim bin Abdullah sends a warrior to announce a gift to B'Dono of fifty goats and a shield. A shield of polished hide, decorated with studs of gold, O witless!"

"Fifty goats? A shield with golden studs?" The chief's eyes goggled and his voice was awed. "And three moons ago I refused B'Dono as a suitor for Evara

because of his poverty!"

Truth gradually sank home and Dorindi smote his head and bellowed aloud in his grief: "My spirit has deceived me! Was ever a man so accursed? A penniless hunter becomes a man of wealth in the winking of an eye and I have scorned him! Ai-ee!"

He drank great gulps of pombe and rocked

to and fro.

His wife rubbed salt in the wound. "The village knows that Evara marries M'Pazo. B'Dono bin Mororo will go elsewhere. Thus we lose a share of his riches through thy muddling, and our people will mock their chief's foolishness."

"And my daughter's heart will break, yearning for this wealthy B'Dono. Truly there is a spell upon me," said Dorindi

mournfully.

"The spell of pombe, maybe!" was the

bitter answer.

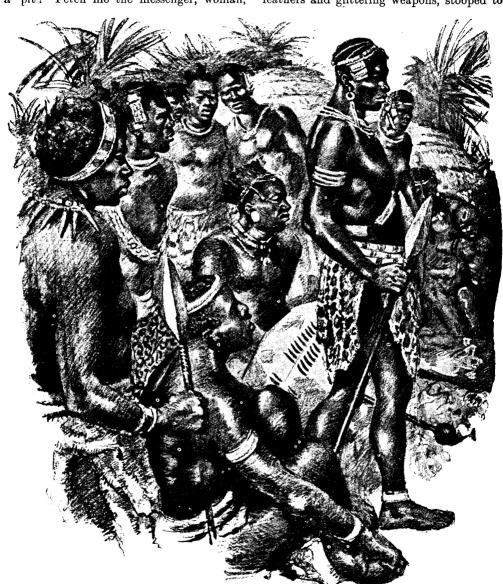
The jibe went unheeded. "A man of my infinite wit may contrive much in two moons," continued the chief hopefully. "B'Dono has not yet heard his good fortune?"

"The warrior must give his message and return at once, by order of Salim. To-day B'Dono shall know."

"Ai-ee!" wailed Dorindi afresh. "The ground falls from beneath me! I am in a pit! Fetch me the messenger, woman,

thoughts buzzed in his brain like a nest of hornets.

At last his wife appeared, and the young warrior of Salim bin Abdullah's bodyguard, magnificent in a tall head-dress of scarlet feathers and glittering weapons, stooped to



"'But they are mine!' protested B'Dono stupidly."

that I may persuade him to my will."

As his wife left the hut, he dragged an ancient stool of carved black wood from the shadows and flung round his shoulders the ceremonial robe of worn leopard-skin, token of his chieftainship. Thus he waited, and his tormented

enter the hut, and the muscles rippled under the polished bronze of his skin.

"Hail!" said Dorindi pompously. "My salutations to Salim bin Abdullah, his messenger! Is it true that B'Dono bin Mororo gains fifty goats and a shield of hide, gold-studded?"

"'Tis true!" agreed the warrior stolidly. "The gifts will arrive by sundown."

Cold shivers tormented the spine of Dorindi. In two short hours the riches were beyond his reach; the thought was appalling. He played for time.

"Bassi! Very well," nodded the soldier. Dorindi gathered himself from the stool and tottered into the blinding white sunlight which lay on the village. He stood for a moment uncertainly, gazing vaguely over the expanse of brown huts and smoke-



"By the dasturi of our tribe," he warned solemnly, "all such announcements are made at the meeting of the sunset council, and strangers are forbidden at the first discussions. It is not possible to tell B'Dono until then. In thy haste to return, perhaps I may be entrusted to make the gifts?"

Dorindi's aged and crafty heart missed a beat while he waited for the answer.

"Nay!" After an eternity the warrior shook his head. "That would offend Salim. I must stay till sunset, then."

The chief groaned beneath his breath. "Then you must rest within my house and my woman shall bring thee *pombe* and food fit for warriors and great chiefs. I shall call the elders."

begrimed roofs which straggled along the high bank of the Ruli River, groping for inspiration.

He found none. In the great square of beaten red earth, towering above the houses, stood the fig-tree, harbourage and home of the ancestral spirits of the Waruli and the decreed meeting-place of the council of elders. There was shade beneath its bulk, and Dorindi walked deliberately towards it, his lips moving soundlessly. Behind him came the infant and the jar of pombe.

He lowered himself stiffly to the ground and faced the problem squarely. Greed dominated his emotions. The herd meant comfort and ease; the gold-enriched shield meant ceremony and stateliness and pompous grandeur, all things dear to the heart of the chief of an African village whose poverty was the inexorable visitation of a barren land.

But Dorindi was old and the heat pressed heavily on him. He drank pombe to stimulate his mind, and found that it merely soothed his body into a placid tranquillity.

"Ai-ee!" he sighed feebly, his chin droop-

ing and his eyes half shut.

Then a figure, scuttling across the open

space, roused him with a shock.

"Awake, fool!" panted his wife. "In an hour the sun sets, and with the light vanishes thy hope of acquiring wealth. Hast found a way?"

"Leave men to the schemes of men,

woman!" parried Dorindi.

"So I thought!" She came to the heart of the matter with the directness of disillusion. "Grandeur and boastings fill thy head, like a star-gazing fool whose feet slide into a pit. Hark then, old one, to a notion which may avail!"

Dorindi sat bolt upright and tilted his head sideways to catch the sibilant whisper

which followed.

"What a woman!" he chuckled into his beard as she shuffled away. "Many times have my fingers curved to clutch her throat. Well that I was generous and refrained! I am rewarded."

He hailed the small boy almost benevolently. "Hai-ee, mtoto, call me the elders! There is a council of great moment to be held. Nay, then, leave the gourd behind, little one!"

The naked child departed importantly and presently his clamour brought the old men, slow as tortoises in the heat, from the sunny nooks. Dorindi wriggled his back against the tree-trunk in comfortable preparation as they gathered in a semicircle, surrounded by young warriors and the women; spat red betel-juice into the dust and held up his stear.

"Pay attention, council of the Waruli! Of late I have spoken often with my spirit, who protects this village from assaults and violence and all the schemings of our friends. My spirit has warned me against the marriage of my daughter Evara to M'Pazo, saying that her heart lies with B'Dono bin Mororo, whom I, to my sorrow, rejected as a son-in-law because of his lack of wealth."

The younger men grinned derisively. Their elders, to whom all such matters had become as vanities and of little account,

drowsed placidly in the sunshine. Dorindi

persisted doggedly:

"My spirit reminds me that I have outlived four wives and it would ill become one who has known such happiness, and is a chief of renown, to allow the trifling dowry of fifteen goats to wreck his daughter's hopes. Such a meanness would burn the heart of so generous a man as myself. I wish, then, to make a new arrangement. Hear it!"

A quivering sigh of amazement ran through the villagers like the stirring of a breeze. Even the oldest councillor, who had lived since seven-mouthed snakes swam in the Ruli River, eating men and breathing pestilence on the land, gaped at Dorindi when a neighbour bawled the intelligence into his cupped ear.

"I will pay a fine," resumed Dorindi, rising and inflating his chest. "I will give M'Pazo five goats to release Evara."

"From thy herd of three, perhaps?"

scoffed M'Pazo.

"Peace," quavered the oldest councillor. "What then, chief?"

"Then I shall betroth my daughter to B'Dono bin Mororo! Stand forth and hear the conditions, B'Dono!" ordered Dorindi.

A muscular young warrior, dressed in a new and handsome robe of leopard-skin, and bearing a spear which glittered like silver, strode into the open space and stood sheepishly on one leg, tugging at his ear in embarrassed wonder.

Dorindi grinned toothlessly. "Truly a mighty hunter and a handsome man, almost such as myself in my youth! Such, as I well know, take the eye of the fairest of women. Hear then the making of thy betrothal, B'Dono bin Mororo!"

The youth blinked and nodded.

"Thy poverty forbids the usual payment to thy father-in-law. But such a matter disturbs me not! No, thy marriage shall take place in two moons, if two conditions are fulfilled as proof of thy worthiness to mate with the daughter of a chief. The first is that thou shalt rid us of the maneating lion which has harried the village, since the rains. The second is that the lion, with all other things that thou shalt slay, or trap, or be given, shall come to me as dowry. Is that agreed?"

"Eh?" asked B'Dono, in trance-like

amazement.

"Everything that thou shalt slay or trap, everything that thou shalt be given, all that thou shalt gain by hunting or trading—these things are my property, exactly-

as they come to thee. Is it a bargain?"

B'Dono scratched his head wonderingly. Never had he heard of such an incredible generosity, and he looked at Dorindi in suspicion. Then, in the crowd of maidens, he saw Evara.

The straight slimness of her figure, her graceful movements, had long enchanted him. And now her dark eyes met his in a slow look that he had been striving for many days to forget.

His doubts of Dorindi began to vanish like a river mist before the sun. What would he gain in two moons? The lion certainly, perhaps a few buck and a leopard or two. Thus he pondered while Dorindi watched through narrowed eyelids.

From the huts came a quick distraction. A deep, impatient voice sounded and then shrill feminine expostulations. Dorindi knew that high-pitched scream very well. The clamour increased and a high, feathered head-dress appeared above the crowd. In an ecstasy of panic the chief grasped B'Dono's arm.

"My anxious heart can wait no longer, B'Dono! The happiness of my child is my spirit's desire. What is the answer?" he demanded, hopping on one leg in his impatience.

B'Dono saw Evara again. "I agree!"

he said happily.

Dorindi shouted aloud: "A contract made before the council and therefore binding!" Then he swung round to confront the tall figure who had thrust a passage through the villagers. "A stranger! I am Dorindi, chief of this village. Who are you?"

"Well I know you are Dorindi!" growled the warrior savagely. "And I am still the messenger of Salim bin Abdullah! Enough of this foolery! Where is B'Dono bin

Mororo?"

"Standing before you!" said Dorindi.

"Then, B'Dono, I bring a message from Salim. In that you saved his life, he sends as reward fifty goats and a shield of hide studded with gold."

He made a signal and the crowd fell apart. Three men drove forward the herd and a fourth brought the shield, wrapped in a covering. The warrior watched gravely while it was unrolled and laid ceremoniously at the feet of B'Dono bin Mororo.

"Now I must go to my own place," he announced, swung round, and was gone.

For a moment there was dead silence, while the meaning of this amazing happening

filtered into the minds of the Waruli; then broke out such a clamour as had not been heard in the village for years. Men shouted, and hysterical women strove to calm their shrieking children. In a calm like that in the middle of a whirlwind stood Dorindi and B'Dono, facing each other.

Triumph and cunning twisted the chief's aged features; B'Dono stood with hanging head, like a bewildered buffalo.

Dorindi held up his spear and shouted for stillness.

"It hath been well done!" he crowed. "My spirit implored me that I, as a man of generosity and a chief, should take for son-in-law a penniless hunter. And I, in my magnificence, obeyed. See how swiftly comes the reward! Fifty goats and a shield are gained by B'Dono bin Mororo, and these, by his contract, he gives to me. Truly my goodness is rewarded!"

'But they are mine!" protested B'Dono

stupidly.

"I appeal to the elders!" snapped Dorindi. "The contract was well made. Are they my property or B'Dono's?"

The eldest of the council absorbed the problem, frowningly, and conferred with his fellows.

"The council says," he quavered at last, "that B'Dono shall give the present to Dorindi, to keep his contract according to the dasturi of the Waruli. The things are Dorindi's."

B'Dono heard dully. He was big and muscular and simple of soul, and his simple soul was hurt. To a hunter the goats were foolish animals, unworthy of the consideration of the man who had slain his lion single-handed. But the shield was a thing of beauty, perfectly fashioned and ornamented with an elaborate design.

He approached slowly, with hypnotised eyes, and rubbed his fingers on the smooth perfection of the hide, touching the studs one by one.

"A man could do fine deeds with that!" he sighed. "There is room for the record-

ing of a lifetime's fighting on it!"

"Nay!" Dorindi held up a dignified hand.

"This shield is no common weapon for common fighting. It will be preserved and handed to my children's children as a token of their grandsire's greatness. It is for use on occasions of state; yet, perhaps, if that day shall come, I may lead my warriors into battle, bearing this shield as an encouragement to them and a warning to my enemies."

"Tcheh!" grunted B'Dono in disgust.

"And the goats! A fine herd? Well Salim bin Abdullah knows that a present to another chief should be of befitting quality!"

"He steals not only your property, but the credit as well, that crocodile," grumbled M'Robo, the friend of B'Dono. "Soon he will have a fine tale of how he rescued Salim from a hundred raging leopards!"

"Ho! B'Dono! Is it fitting that young men should idle while there is hunting to

do? That lion is still uncaught!"

With this final shot the jubilant Dorindi thrust his arm into the loops of the shield, swaggering with a certain lopsided dignity. His wife hovered on the edge of the herd, her lips compressed in an effort to restrain her seething irritation. The chief saw her.

"Woman!" he bawled. "Kill me a fat kid from the herd. The chief of the Waruli would eat!" He turned to B'Dono. "Do thy hunting well, B'Dono. Remember that thou art now the future son-in-law of me, Dorindi. See that thy deeds are a credit

to my house!"

Agape with wonder, the whole village watched as he limped across the village square to his house, one shoulder dipping beneath the weight of the magnificent shield. "Mshenzi! The blackguard!" breathed M'Robo.

The chief's wife followed him fearfully. "Woman!" he said sharply as they entered the hut. "Hand me the gourd of pombe that I see in the corner!" He tipped it up, drank, and handed it back with an imperial

"Who now," he asked with cutting sarcasm, "is chief of the half-wits? Who is a toad? Could the matter have been

better contrived? Bring more pombe and slay that goat, that I may eat. Hasten,

woman!"

And his wife obeyed, humbly.

#### II.

It was morning. With four of his friends B'Dono bin Mororo left the village and scrambled down into the dried bed of the Ruli River, searching for a quiet place in which to discuss the affair.

"Did you observe," asked M'Robo, squatting against a flat rock, "that this warrior said he was still the messenger of Salim? Still the messenger! That snake Dorindi had already spoken with him. The plot

was well laid, and you, B'Dono, had not wit enough to see it!"

"Tcheh!" said B'Dono testily. "The

thing is done."

"But we shall demand that the betrothal be broken and the things given back," persisted M'Robo.

"To what profit?" demanded B'Dono.

"I shall lose Evara."

"With fifty goats and a shield of hide, what is Evara?" His friend spat scornfully. "A warrior so equipped may take his choice of the maidens."

"My choice would be Evara, and her I should not get," said B'Dono decisively, thereby confessing how thoroughly the wiles

of Dorindi had entrapped him.

"Truly you are bewitched!" argued M'Robo heatedly. "He sits in his hut like a crocodile amongst the mud, that Dorindi. Then snap! and such fools as you are cheated and undone!"

"Even so, I shall get Evara!"

M'Robo stared at his friend in pitying

silence and they fell to brooding.

The hours passed. The sun rose high and the narrow, rocky river-bed became a blistering inferno of reflected heat. The air hung in quivering waves between the walls of gleaming stone, and even the droning insects seemed to have deserted the place for cooler shades, yet B'Dono sat immobile, his chin propped in one palm. He was a man of action and plotting was foreign to his nature, so he thought slowly.

But at length his slow smile startled his

friends.

"We may yet pull the stool of self-satisfaction from under Dorindi," he remarked. "Let us go after that eater of men; even a hunter's wits may be of some use."

"Good!" said M'Robo dryly, and rose. They travelled fast, despite the weight of their weapons, along the bank of the river to the low foothills where, according to rumour, the lion lived amongst the rocks. Twining thorn-scrub tore their limbs as they passed, red dust drifted into their lungs and made their eyes smart, yet B'Dono's anger against Dorindi drove him onwards, heedless of fatigue.

At sunset they made camp and ate mealies; when the others were wrapped in their blankets and asleep, B'Dono bin Mororo stayed awake, alive to all the myriad sounds of the bush which hemmed them in. The moon rose. From the far distance came a short, hiccoughing roar. The youth rose

upright, his muscles tense. His eyes closed as he traced in his mind the devious route of the hunting beast.

"Travelling north," he decided. "And always between the hills and the river."

Until dawn he listened, shivering in the night mist, yet gaining knowledge with every passing hour. When the first grey light showed the trees like misshapen ghosts on the hill-side, he let the blanket slide from his shoulders, gathered up his spears, and slid noiselessly into the bush.

The level red rays of the sunrise dazzled his eyes as he climbed a high rock and flattened himself against the very crest. Down below, the bush stretched out like a sea, with here and there an island of reddish

rock.

He shaded his eyes and watched. Then he leant forward. Against the rocks he saw a tawny shape, moving with a leisurely grace, head down, slipping along close to the concealing cliff. It reached a tangle of stones, leapt confidently from one to another and suddenly vanished from view.

"Full fed and going to sleep," thought B'Dono. "An old lion and a wily. I must

find his drinking-place."

When he judged the beast to have settled, he returned to the river-bed and worked up-stream, his short spear, sharpened to a razor edge and glittering in the sunshine, held ready to strike. But he encountered nothing and soon reached a pool.

Round its edges were spoor, the broad marks of the lion's pads in the sand. And in the steep bank opposite were fresh clawmarks, where the heavy beast had descended. B'Dono had all the information he wanted.

Two hours later, panting, he dropped into the shade of a meagre thorn-tree beside his friends and drank thirstily from a gourd.

"There is work to do!" he announced.
"I have found the beast and his drinking-place. To-night we shall catch him."

"Ai-ee! Surely the loss of the shield has addled your wits," grumbled M'Robo. "Trap a man-eater like a craven hyæna! You are mad! Let us slay the beast and give the reeking hide to the warrior, thy father-in-law."

"Let us make the cage!" said B'Dono

firmly.

They set to work. They cut down and trimmed small trees, binding them into squares of trellis-work with the tough vines which grew against the great banyan trees. These they lashed together and bound again with vines until they formed a box, so firm

that all their strength could scarcely cause it to creak.

"Such a trap would hold a full-grown rhinoceros," said B'Dono when they had done. "Now there remains but a small matter—to tempt the beast to enter."

"We need a fat kid for bait," suggested

I'Robo.

"I know of something better than that," said B'Dono. "A way of catching lions that needs men and the skill of hunters. Let us carry this cage to the pool. Time is short."

The journey was hard. Poles were thrust through the framework at each corner, and the young men toiled in the full heat of a blazing afternoon as they carried it along the rocky bed of the Ruli River.

Close to the drinking-pool the bank overhung, washed out by the swirling floods of the rainy season, and just beneath it B'Dono placed the cage. Long thongs ran from the opened lid and round the trunks of trees, so that a concealed watcher could close it with a single tug.

"And the bait, B'Dono?" asked M'Robo.

"Spear me a buck, so that the smell of blood may attract him. The bait shall be myself—the brute has a taste for men's flesh. I must tempt him into hasty action."

"Ai-ee! Truly thou art mad!" protested

M'Robo, departing.

The sun was reddening and dropping slowly. The evening breeze freshened in cool puffs; from the low ground came the croaking of myriad frogs, and somewhere a hunting beast gave tongue. B'Dono bin Mororo examined the trap again, examined the bush-path down which the beast would come, and was at length satisfied.

Presently came M'Robo, carrying the buck

he had slain.

"If this fails, we must kill the lion and Dorindi will mock me for ever from behind the shield. That must not be, M'Robo," warned B'Dono. "Give me the buck and hide in the bush. When the beast enters the cage—pull, and quickly!"

"Of a certainty," said the obedient

M'Robo.

B'Dono smeared blood on his hands and arms, and flung the carcase into the riverbed. Carefully he chose a place on the extreme edge of the bank, testing the firmness of the ground, and took up his position, half kneeling. His short, broad-bladed hunting spear was his only weapon.

The darkness gathered swiftly and the stars appeared over his head. In the chill

he remained motionless, shivering, while thoughts of doubt began to assail him.

"This is a weary business, playing bait to a lion," he muttered beneath his breath. "But better that I should be slain than have to endure the mockery of Dorindi. Ai-ce! I wish it were well over!"

Then his body grew taut. Somewhere along the bush-path there was a rustling, faint as the stirring of leaves. He shut his eyes, the better to listen. It might be an incautious buck, or it might be . . .

Something stole into view round the bend, a darker smudge against the shadows. He discerned the outline of a massive head and shoulders. In imagination he saw the twitching nostrils, the distended eyes, as the lion peered towards him, head outstretched in suspicion.

B'Dono's lips were compressed and every muscle of his lithe body braced to spring. The lion came on, moving with a rippling, noiseless motion; then he sank to earth and the hunter heard the swishing of the dry grass as his tail swept slowly from side to side.

"Quick, brute!" thought B'Dono desperately.

As if in answer came a growl, which rose in intensity to a vicious snarl. The lion meant to attack. He rose, came forward at a lurching trot; then his pace quickened.

B'Dono drew a long breath through his nostrils and cursed the excitement which tightened his throat in a choking grip. His body grew tense. The lion came on at a gallop, paused for an imperceptible instant in his stride as though to steady himself. Then he sprang.

The hunter yelled aloud and leaped to one side. A paw flashed close to his head. The curved talons caught his shoulder. The skin ripped as he pitched headlong on the edge of the cage, the beast astride his body. His hand grasped the shaggy mane convulsively and they pitched together into the trap.

For a space of seconds they lay motionless, stunned; then B'Dono, inspired by the energy of panic, tore himself free and flung himself over the edge. Blindly he snatched at the lid as the beast reared to follow. The thing fell. A wicked snarl, the sound of rending claws, and he knew that the lion was trapped.

"Quick, M'Robo!" he shouted. "Fasten the lid!"

Through the loops of vine branches and the lid they thrust stout poles and bound them

fast with thongs, oblivious of the fury which raged and tore at the bars.

"Let him fight!" panted B'Dono. "He will be the quieter to carry to-morrow. At dawn we shall trek, so that my father-in-law may not be disappointed of his present. Let us sleep!"

#### III.

DORINDI, chief of the village, was alone in his hut. He lay stretched on his bed, the shield at his side, and his thin beard moved gently as he dreamed pleasant dreams. His wife was tending his herd in the *shamba* beyond the village. It was a time of exquisite peace.

A low growl awoke him. He sat upright lazily to hurl a stream of blistering invective at the disturber of his rest; then his body stiffened.

"Ho! Awake, Dorindi!" said B'Dono bin Mororo.

Dorindi blinked. Thrust half-way through the doorway was a low contraption of interlaced branches and vines, from which came again that sound of snarling fury.

"What is this?" he demanded with dignity. "Is a chieftain's sleep to be broken by the imbecilities of a foolish hunter?"

"I have fulfilled the second part of my bargain," said B'Dono calmly. "This is the lion who eats men."

"Eh?" Dorindi picked up the gourd. Squinting over the edge as he gulped pombe, he saw that B'Dono was outside the hut, leaning on the cage, and behind him were all the village.

"To come to you as dowry," explained the hunter. "That was the contract?" He turned to the councillors.

"So it was agreed! We were witnesses."
Dorindi rose in his dignity. "Slay me the beast. His hide will suffice!"

B'Dono shook his head. "Nay. Everything I should receive, everything I should slay or capture, was to be given to thee exactly as I found it. But there was no mention of things I make with my own hands. Therefore this cage is mine!"

"True, the cage is thine!" confirmed the

"So I give thee the lion, but not the cage." The hunter began to fumble with the thongs of the lid. "Take him, Dorindi!"

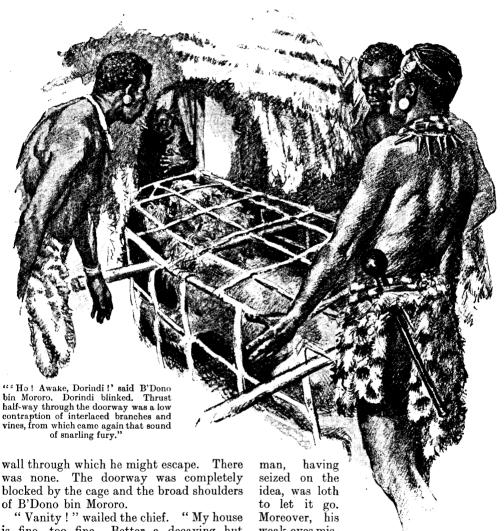
Slow trickles of sweat ran down the chief's lank jaws. "Stay!" he quavered. "Shall a furious beast be loosed on a chief in his house? Slay him, B'Dono, or the betrothal is ended!"

B'Dono turned to the council: "Hear him! Has he not taken my shield and fifty goats? Can he now withdraw?"

The elders, out in the sunshine, conferred together with great deliberation, for tribal law was not lightly to be settled. Pro and con they argued it, while the lion lashed himself into a temper and Dorindi cast eyes about his hut, looking for some breach in the

"Tchah!" interrupted Dorindi. I see that this hunter is unfit to be son-in-law to a chief. He is mshenzi—a bushman! I declare the betrothal ended. Remove this beast, B'Dono!"

Dorindi, swaying slightly on his straddled legs, delivered this speech with an air of great dignity, and grimaced warningly at the aged councillor for silence. But the old



is fine, too fine. Better a decaying hut through which I could force a way!"

He drained the gourd of pombe at a draught and felt a wave of fresh courage running through his veins. With an uncertain swagger he buckled on his shield, picked up his spear, and faced the multitude.

The eldest of the council approached. "The council says that the argument must stand," he droned. "The council says . . ." weak eyes mis-

took the grimace for a smile of approval. So he continued: "Nay, Dorindi." Since

B'Dono has fulfilled his bond, the contract cannot be broken. So says dasturi."

B'Dono tugged at the thongs. "When I lift this lid, Dorindi, the beast will spring forth. Kill him!"

"Hold!" quavered Dorindi. "Hold!"

"It is a simple matter!" urged the eldest

councillor. "In thy young days, so we have heard from thy tales, thou hast slain many lions, big as elephants and fierce as lightning. Slay this little one, Dorindi, and end the matter!"

The chieftain rocked on his heels and the sky grew dark. Outside he heard his wife's acid tones; the excited villagers crowded closer to see the proceedings, and the lion roared.

"O woe! O sorrow! In mine old age I am doomed to die from the teeth of a raging

brute!" he moaned to himself.

Then a smile broke out over the features of B'Dono bin Mororo. The astounded chief

stared, blinked, and stared again.

"There is yet another way, Dorindi," said the hunter, and his voice was honey smooth. "Provided that the contract stands, and thou agree to my marriage with Evara forthwith, matters may be settled in friendship between us."

"I agree!" gasped Dorindi. "I agree! I admire thee, B'Dono, for a mighty hunter and a man of generosity, second only to myself in this tribe! What is in thy mind,

friend?"

"Dorindi agrees!" chorused the crowd, and the words were a comfort to Evara, trembling amongst the maidens.

"I might sell thee the cage," suggested

B'Dono softly.

"Agreed! I will give two goats, fine

"For a cage like this, which holds death itself from thy throat?" The reminder

made Dorindi shiver. "Nay!"

"Three goats? Four?" The chief made a magnificent gesture. "Then, B'Dono, to thee I shall give five goats!"

The hunter shrugged his shoulders coldly. "Thy notions are foolish! Let me state a price." He paused for a moment. "It will be . . . forty goats, and the shield with golden studs."

"Ai-ee!" Dorindi wailed in horror.

"Forty goats and the shield? But I paid M'Pazo five goats for breaking his betrothal to Evara. Consider that, B'Dono!"

"And still there are five remaining. These I will leave to thee, Dorindi, not as dowry for thy daughter, who, I agree, is beyond price, but as a token of my love for thee!"

B'Dono delivered the sentiment with a

fervour worthy of the chief himself, but the time was ill-chosen and Dorindi missed the fine flavour of it. He sank upon his knees, took a handful of ashes from the dead fire and rubbed them on his head.

"And the shield? Also the shield?" he.

moaned.

"Also the shield," repeated B'Dono.
"It, with the two-score goats, is to be handed to me before the cage is moved. Long have I known thee, Dorindi!"

Dorindi seized the *pombe* gourd, found it empty, and hurled it into a corner. "What a son-in-law!" he screamed. "A penniless hunter with the greed of a thousand hyænas! My heart breaks!"

"Then it is settled?" asked B'Dono

laconically.

"Take the shield!" The chief flung it across the cage. "My wife will bring the goats! Wealth has left me! Take it, snake!"

"The council hears that I am still to marry Evara?" asked B'Dono formally, as his friends began to remove the beast.

"We are witnesses!" confirmed the elders.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

The wife of Dorindi came to the hut in search of her husband. "O schemer!" she shrilled. "O magnificent chief who could cheat B'Dono of his riches! O lump of mud!"

"Woman," protested Dorindi, "we have yet five goats left. They will breed. In a year or two we shall be rich!"

"O witless! Hast forgotten that in thy grandeur thou hast eaten goat's flesh every day? Four of those goats have gone down thy skinny gullet, old crocodile! Only one remains, an old he-goat, so rank that even thou must choke on his flesh!"

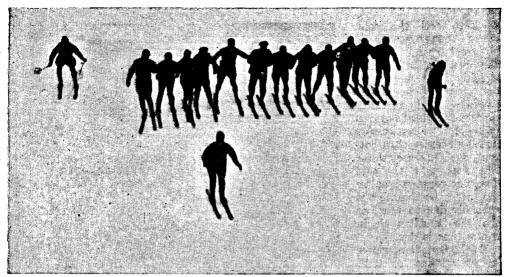
The jaws of the aged Dorindi fell apart. "It is true," he confessed. "I have eaten

well."

"And now thou shalt starve, for a lesson, O scheming ape with the brain of a tortoise!"

"Boy, bring pombe," almost pleaded the chief.

He drank deeply, disregarding the mourning of his wife, then bound a blanket about his head for a sign of illness. Crawling to his bed, he sighed thrice and turned his face to the wall.



A GEOUP OF SKIERS ON THE BIG SKI HILL AT SHAW BRIDGE, QUEBEC.

# WINTER SPORTS • IN CANADA •

By F. G. BAILEY

Photographs reproduced by courtesy of the Canadian National Railways.

ANY Europeans thinking of Canada in winter conjure up a desolate picture of ice and snow, dead trees, frozen water-taps and shivering people with frost-bitten faces and "nipped" toes. To them the fact that the Canadian people manage to survive their winters remains one of the eternal mysteries. They believe that to venture outside the house between the end of October and the first of March the Canadian must bundle up in woollen underwear and coats of fur, cover his hands with heavy mittens, fur preferred, and his head with a grotesque-looking cap with flaps coming down over the ears.

Yet, strange as it may seem, Canadians, and, in fact, visitors from other countries who find themselves in Canada during the winter months, thoroughly enjoy the cold weather, glorying in the sparkling freshness of the season. They have little desire to hug the fire, but prefer instead to go out of doors and

take part in many of the winter sports for which Canada is famous. There is little inducement to stay indoors on a day when the sun is shining high in the heavens or on an evening; when the full moon casts a romantic glow on snow-carpeted hills—a true description of an average Canadian winter day and many a winter evening.

Such cold, crisp, invigorating winter days as Canadians experience every year hold a potent appeal to young and old, and few can resist the call of the out of doors. The young take to their skis and snow-shoes, or hie them to their favourite toboggan slide, while the middle-aged and even old people delight in long tramps over the crisp surface of the frozen earth.

To imagine that the Canadian winter is not cold is to be mistaken. The thermometer does drop, on some occasions, almost out of sight; yet on an average day, provided one is properly clothed, there is no

need to feel the cold. Many young people in Montreal spend days in the open air, bareheaded, wearing light underwear and garbed in bright sweaters and ridingbreeches. Some have even passed the winter wearing nothing heavier than cotton for under-clothing. The fact that the cold does not penetrate unless the wind be blowing is probably due to the fact that the Canadian air in winter-time is dry.

To the Canadian, winter is not a time of dull, drizzly weather, but rather of bright sunshine, fresh days and much happiness. The amount of sun-

shine enjoyed in Eastern Canada during the winter is often remarked on by visitors, and the intensity of the sun's rays seems to be increased through reflection from the white carpet which the snow spreads over the whole countryside. In the early spring, when signs of summer begin to appear, the heat of the sun in the daytime slowly melts the snow on the trees, when



FISHING THROUGH THE ICE ON THE BLANC BEC TRAIL.



MOUNTAIN CLIMBING IN THE SNOW AT JASPER NATIONAL PARK, IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES.

evening comes again the water freezes, and in the morning the trees present one of the most beautiful sights in nature. Every twig is covered with a thin, fine coating of ice, and small icicles hang at the end of every bough, presenting a spectacle such as might be expected only in Fairyland.

In addition to the natural beauty which every part of Canada possesses during the winter months, there are winter sports and events, many of which are peculiar to certain areas. The maritime provinces of Ontario and Quebec have their snow-shoeing and the latter her annual winter carnival, with tobogganing on the famous terrace; Montreal and Toronto their ski-ing and annual ski-jumping competitions; Toronto also has its ice-boating on the lake, and the prairies their Dog Derbys. British Columbia has her world-renowned ski meet at Revelstoke.

But it is in Montreal that the Canadian winter season reaches its height. The city is now beginning to capitalise its winter attractions and to advertise them all over North America, with the result that each winter sees an increasing number of tourists from many parts of the North American Continent, for the city has much to offer. Historic Mount Royal, which towered above the Indian village of Hochelage in Jacques Cartier's time, now stands sentinel over the greatest city of the Dominion. In addition, it constitutes a natural pleasure-ground within easy reach of all the inhabitants. It is left virtually as Nature made it and it is easily approached from nearly every section of the



YOUTHFUL SKIERS TAKING A REST.

city. An ideal place for picnics in summer, Mount Royal is even more popular during the winter, and thither flock thousands of office workers and visitors seeking the freshness and freedom of the open air on snowshoes and skis. No automobiles are allowed on the mountain, and the only vehicles to be met are a few old horse-drawn sleighs, the horses' harness covered with tinkling bells and the passengers warmly bundled in buffalo robes. At 5.30 in the evening the street-cars which run along the base of the mountain are throughd with boys and girls gaily garbed and carrying skis. The young people go on to the mountain, don their skis and spend the evening gliding over the surface of the snow, most of the time by the light of the moon. Others proceed to the toboggan slide, which runs from the top of the mountain down a steep incline and then

for half a mile along the level. This slide is made of ice and, when conditions are right, permits the attainment of terrific speed on the downward journey. On less precipitous slopes young children have their own private toboggans. Other spots nearly level provide excellent practice-ground for inexperienced skiers.

In Montreal the ski has definitely supplanted the snow-shoe in popularity, and while in some maritime villages it is a popular saying that children

can swim as soon as they can walk, here they take to skis while they are still unsteady on their feet. The result is that thousands of young boys and girls are really experts in the pastime. Not only on the mountain itself is ski-ing practised, but in the Laurentian Hills to the south. Every week-end the Canadian National Railways (to whom we are indebted for our photographs) run a "Skiers Special," a train which leaves on Saturday night and returns on Sunday night after darkness

has fallen. These trains are packed with skiers of all ages and both sexes, each of whom has his or her favourite spot in the hills. The Laurentians are ideally adapted to ski-ing, inasmuch as there are long slopes free of trees and falls, down which the skiers can race without fear of injury. Many there are who have their winter game as well as their summer camp in these hills, to which they return after a day's hard ski-ing to fill up on good substantial Canadian fare and where they may sit through the long winter evening before a roaring log-fire.

In addition to ski-ing and snow-shoeing, Eastern Canada has many other attractive winter sports. Ice-skating is one of the most popular pastimes of the younger generation, and amateur ice hockey leagues have a following which is second only to the following of the great international professional



BOUNCING A NEW MEMBER OF A FRENCH-CANADIAN SNOW-SHOE CLUB, QUEBEQ.

games. This game, which is probably the fastest known, is played on ice, usually indoors, although in the rural districts, and even in Montreal itself, groups of boys clear their own rink by scraping the frozen surface of a lake or widening in a river.

For the older people and others fancy skating and skating to music on the ice is popular. Such skating is perhaps one of the most graceful of exercises and, in addition, very health-promoting. The old custom, handed down from previous generations, of having sleigh rides out into the country, is well maintained by the present generation of Canadians, in spite of the replacement of the horse by the automobile. In the cities as well as in the country towns it is no uncommon sight in the evenings to

open. The race is not between single dogs chasing an electric hare, but between teams of dogs, harnessed to Canadian sleds and driven by Canadian woodsmen.

The type of dog used in these races is hard to describe, as they are of all types and breeds. In fact, in any one dog taking part in the race might be traced the blood of a great mixture of ancestors. Perhaps these dogs have been best described in the words of C. H. Lash:—

"Up there in the North the dog is an instrument of utility and not of pleasure, co-partner with man in his battles with nature and his struggle for existence. These dogs never smell carbolic or sleep in straw-strewn kennels. The fancy biscuits of the pampered pet of the parlour are as unknown to them as ice-cream sodas to an Eskimo. They rustle their own baths in the lakes and rivers and snow. They sleep where and when they can and they are grateful for anything to eat, from a well-picked bone flung



DOG TRAIN AND AEROPLANE AT RED LAKE, ONTARIO.

see a great farm wagon, its body filled with straw, come dashing up the street with a laughing, singing crowd of men and women, a four- or six-horse team in the van, their harness decked with bells whose tinkling gives to the Canadian winter a liveliness and brightness which is lacking in countries where winter rains take the place of snow flurries.

Characteristically Canadian, too, are the annual "Dog Derbies," which are run every year at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and at The Pas in Manitoba. Fortunately, the lines of the Canadian National Railways run right into the northerly section and permit many city people who take an interest in these annual classics to see them. These races are run over the snow, usually in early spring. The contestants are men and dogs who have spent most of their lives in the

from their master's fire to fish frozen as solid as a piece of granite. They have no pedigree and they have no style; most have fleas and some have very surly tempers. All have strong bodies and stout hearts and, as fact has proved, time and time again, a fidelity that lasts to death."

Such are the dogs who take part in these classic races of the North, and it is well that they have the stout hearts which Mr. Lash attributes to them, for the race at Prince Albert, for instance, is run on four consecutive days, the dogs being required to cover on each day 40 miles. It is run on a 20mile oval track which is so situated amid natural surroundings that spectators can follow the progress of the dogs for almost every foot of the distance. The trophies for this magnificent trial of endurance might be considered inadequate by those who were in the game for money. There is a cash prize to be divided among the winning teams, and last year the Canadian Prime Minister



A EGG TEAM IN THE LAURENTIAN HILLS OF QUEBEC.



DEER-HUNTING IN THE MAGETAWAN DISTRICT, ONTARIO.

offered a silver cup to the winner. But most prized of all, and the goal to which even the smallest children aspire. is the honour of winning the great race, for dog-racing over the snow is part and parcel of life in Western Canada. Every child has a dog or a team, and on the prairies the pedigrees of well-known racing dogs are discussed as intelligently at the village store as are the pedigrees of British Derby winners.

Even more exciting than dog-racing is ice-boating, which finds its greatest vogue on Lake Ontario near Toronto. This sport

is exhilarating in the extreme. The ships themselves consist of a triangular frame to the three corners of which are fixed steel runners. The runner at the rear of the iceboat moves and is used for steering. A mast is erected on the forward cross-piece, and to this a sail varying in size according to the size of the boat is affixed. Those who take part in the sport sit in the rear of the boat, just as they would in a yacht, and handle the sail and the tiller from that point. With a stiff breeze blowing these ice-boats are capable of a speed of a mile a minute and require very skilful handling if they are to retain an even keel. In races turns are taken at a terrific pace, the boats veering round in their own lengths.

One of the latest pastimes to be added to the list of Canadian winter sports is that which has become known as tramping the Blanc Bec trails. Those taking part are able with a good guide to travel on snow-



EMILE ST. GODDARD, YOUTHFUL DOG MUSHER FROM THE PAS, MANITOBA.

shoes deep into the heart of the forest, over trails formerly used by the trappers in their winter operations. Experience has taught some of these woodsmen that there is more money to be made in catering to the demand of tourists for excitement than in trapping wild animals for their furs. Hence they have established outfitting-posts and built small cabins at various points along their old trapping-lines, and to these they will guide' tourists from the cities. Not only will they; undertake to show the way through the woods, but they supply snow-shoes, dog teams, sleds, blankets, food, cooking-utensils, and even clothing, should the tourist be without the proper outfit. The number of these Blanc Bec trails is limited, but more are being added every year. The first were opened in the Lake St. John district of Northern Quebec, where conditions are particularly favourable to their operation. They begin at various points along the main



THE FAMOUS DOG-SLED DERBY AT ST. PAS, MANITOBA. EMILE ST. GODDARD, THE WINNER, NEARING THE FINISH WELL AHEAD OF THE REST OF THE FIELD.

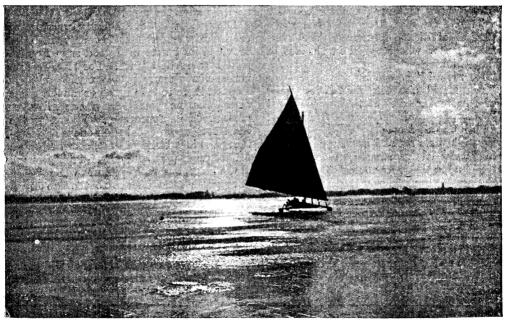
line of the Canadian National Railways, so that those who desire to enjoy this novel experience may travel by train to the point at which their adventure will begin. In addition, the traffic officials of the railways have co-operated with the woodsmen to the extent of directing to their "trails" tourists who make application, and in return they secure an undertaking from the guides that they (the guides) are in a position to outfit comfortably tourist parties who may be sent to them.

Last year the Blanc Bec trails had their first season, and a number of tourists from the United States who tramped them expressed themselves enthralled with the appearance of Canada's woods in winter, and, in addition, they developed appetites of which they thought they were no longer

capable. They returned to town their health improved and their muscles hardened after a thoroughly enjoyable trip in the open. It may be stated in explanation that the term "Blanc Bec" is a French-Canadian one, meaning literally "White Beak," or, as the Indians say, "Pale Faces," referring, no doubt, to the personal appearance of the city people who take part in the fun.

Those who prefer less spectacular forms of winter sport will find in Canada many pastimes to their liking. Curling has increased in popularity during the past few years until to-day nearly every town and village in the Dominion has its annual Bonspiel.

There is always skating outdoors and in covered rinks, and snow-shoe tramps appeal to almost anyone who still has the fire of youth in his veins.



ICE YACHTING ON TORONTO BAY.

# THE CHAUFFEURS' ROOM

By A. M. BURRAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

"Very good," replied the other doubtfully. "I don't suppose there'll be any chauffeurs in this morning. But if there should be——"

"I can guarantee not to eat him. I prefer chops. And I don't suppose he'll want to eat me."

With which Herriott turned away and

passed under the arch.

The "George" at Shillbury was one of those old-fashioned, homely country inns, yet provided its guests with good solid English food at a modest price. For that reason, perhaps, not many people with chauffeurs stopped there to take lunch or dinner. place was not sufficiently expensive or pretentious in appearance. Wherefore the chauffeurs' room exhaled an odour of desuetude, a subtle blend of dust, soot and mice. All the ugly, worn and out-of-date furniture in the hotel, and those pictures which would have given most offence to the eye of an artist, were assembled there in company with two bicycles and a discarded pram. Herriott reviewed the scene apathetically as he sat down on a horsehair chair which stung him like an adder.

Rose Wise! To think of seeing her at the "George"! Of course she lived only fifteen miles away, and it would have been hardly surprising if he had caught a glimpse of her somewhere along the road. Perhaps it was because of this chance that he drove so often along the old Roman highway to the Queen of English Cities. It was only since he had quarrelled with Rosa that he had begun to persuade himself that he really liked Bath. And now that he had seen her again at last he was sorry that the thing had happened. He was aware that the pains which had racked his heart a year ago had been merely drugged for a little while, not permanently killed.

How had it all happened? Even he could

ERRIOTT was not sorry that every seat at every table of the coffeerom was occupied. On entering, his gaze, before it hastily travelled around the room, had first alighted on the girl who sat with her back to the diagonally opposite corner. It would be most embarrassing, not to say painful, to sit down and eat in Rosa Wise's presence; embarrassing for Rosa too. Yet he felt compelled to make a gesture of disappointment to the overworked waiter who stopped in the act of passing him.

"No room?" he asked.

"I'm afraid not, sir, unless you wait. Won't be ten minutes at the outside, sir."

"Sorry," said Herriott, relieved.

"Afraid I can't stop."

0

He walked slowly and heavily downstairs and encountered the manager, whom he knew.

"Full up in the coffee-room," he observed.

"Nowhere else where you could give me a bite?"

"Afraid not, Mr. Herriott, but I don't think we shall have to keep you waiting

many minutes."

"Wait a moment. What's that big room across the arch which I happened to blunder into just now? It seemed to have a table and some chairs in it."

The manager made deprecatory motions

with his hands.

"Oh, Mr. Herriott, I couldn't put you in there. That's the chauffeurs' room—where the visitors' chauffeurs have their meals."

Herriott made a noise expressive of weariness, which might almost have been called a grunt. His heart had been numbed by the sight of that girl upstairs.

"I didn't see any chauffeurs in there," he said. "Besides, I have never noticed any disposition on the part of a skilled driver and mechanic to murder me on sight. Get them to send me in a couple of chops."

not unravel all the trifling circumstances. There had been a clash of wills, and stubborn pride on both sides. Somehow an ant-heap had grown into an unsurmountable barrier. Once having started, they had been thorough in their quarrelling. They had made it quite impossible for either to approach the other. Thus it was duly announced that the marriage which had been arranged between Mr. Rodney Herriott, of Shaw Gates, Lestings, and Miss Rosa Wise, second daughter of Sir Vernon Wise, of Ridney Court, Hardover, would not take place.

She had not changed at all. He was young enough to expect to see changes in her in the short space of twelve months. And just that swift glimpse of her had brought back the old yearning with the old pains. It was all her fault. He had loved her splendidly—still loved her while he hated her—and she had chosen to treat him like a

dog!

So his thoughts ran on while a maid laid the table and presently set before him the food which he had no mind to touch. He had scarcely picked up knife and fork, with a weary air of paying unwilling tribute to his needs, when the door was opened by a man who carried a peaked cap in his left hand and wore the plain uniform of a chauffeur. Herriott was to have company after all!

Herriott glanced up at his prospective table companion, nodded, and said "Good morning" with the intention of putting the new-comer at his ease. This was a good intention wasted. Mr. Bird was not observant, and he had a skin like that of a two-hundred-years-old carp. He was, therefore, seldom out of countenance. He was a jolly young man with a round red face and looked like one who had the care of horses rather than of machinery. The round red face lit up with pleasure at the prospect it gave Mr. Bird of having the company of some other servant at the luncheon table.

"'Mornin', chum," he responded affably; and with that he sat down, stretched himself,

and sniffed.

"Them chops smell all right," he remarked. "And here have I bin and gone and ordered steak."

"I dare say it isn't too late to change."

"Oh, san fairy ann. I don't mind much wot I eats. But 'aven't you noticed how sometimes you thinks you fancies something, and then you sees somebody eatin' something else and prefers that? It's a bad thing not to know your own mind. Leads to a lot of trouble in this world. I've noticed it.

Specially among the toffs. Mind if I smokes a gasper while I waits for my bit o' fodder?"

"Carry on," said Herriott.

There was silence for a little while but not for long. There was seldom silence for long where Mr. Bird was free to loose his tongue.

"'Scuse me, chum," he resumed presently. "J'ou mind telling me what you are? I can see by your clothes you ain't a chauffeur. I've guessed you're a valet. Am I right?"

"Perfectly," Herriott replied coldly.

"Ah! And 'ow did I know that? I notices things. I thought at first as you might be a commercial, but then you wouldn't 'ave come in 'ere if you 'ad been. They're too high and mighty. Then I could see as you wasn't a chauffeur, and as butlers and footies don't get taken about, I guessed wot you was. How do you get on with your toff?"

"How do I—— Oh, he's no hero to me," said Herriott, remembering the proverb.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Bird sympathetically. "One of the sort as thinks you're a machine, and never smiles nor looks at you as if you was a human bein'. I've 'ad some of them. But I've struck lucky this time. Been eight months at my place, and dynamite ain't goin' to shift me. 'Ere!" Mr. Bird leaned across the table and waxed even more confidential. "My name's Bird. Wot might yours be?"

"It might be Smith."

"Well, Smith, ole man, I'll tell you something. I've 'ad all sorts o' jobs since I come out of the Army, but I never struck a softer billet than the one wot I'm in now. Lovely grub, not too much work, good tips from the right kind o' visitors, and treated all the time as if I was a man. And not only that, but there's a young lady who's second housemaid wot I'm goin' to marry as soon as I've laid by enough to put in for a good pub."

"You're lucky!" said Herriott shortly.

"Lucky! O' course I'm lucky! Them sort of jobs wants finding, but they are to be 'ad! 'Ere! I've just took one of my young ladies in 'ere this morning to go to Lady Shamper's bazaar. And wot do you think she does? She doesn't send me down 'ere for a bit of food and pay the bill herself like some of them would. No! 'Ere's five shillings for your lunch and tea,' she says. So I can go and 'ave it where I like and make what I like out o' the change. That's the sort Miss Rosa is."

Although he was aware of being held forth

to by a modern pilenomenon, a man satisfied with his job and one who actually refrained from hating his employers, Herriott had scarcely listened. The last three words, however, penetrated to the very roots of him.

"Miss Rosa?" he repeated.

"Miss Rosa Wise, daughter of Sir Vernon Wise, Bart. She's upstairs now, 'avin' 'er lunch. I expect you've 'eard of Sir Vernon."

"I have."

Herriott's tone drew upon himself an inquisitive

stare.

"Ah! You ever bin in service there?"

"Not exactly."

"Wot do you mean by – Oh, **I** Tried see! for a job and didn't get it?"

"That is more or less what happened."

The arrival of Mr. Bird's steak interrupted the dialogue for a moment or two. Mr. Bird, as he helped himself, made silent comment on the purity of Herriott's accents, or, as he phrased it to himself, his fancy way of talking. Picked it up

from his master, of course. These valets were all alike. Mr. Bird had the same goodnatured contempt for them as a class which a sunburnt he-man from the great open spaces might feel towards a professional dancing partner of the male sex. However, it did not in the least affect his bonhomie.

"You was unlucky," he remarked.

"I know."

in love

"Sir Vernon isn't a bad old stick, although the two young ladies is worth ten of him. Especially Miss Rosa. And as she's been disappoint ed



you? 'Ad a row with 'er bloke and parted That was before I come, with 'im.

"Really!" said Herriott, wondering if he had done anything to deserve that this fiend in the form of a chauffeur should come to torment him.

"M'm," said Mr. Bird with his mouth full.

"Of course, everybody downstairs knew all about it, and they 'adn't done talkin' about it when I come there. We can't quite make out 'ow it 'appened. She was goin' to get married to a bloke named Herriott, and it

like. And Miss Rosa practically admitted same to Mary."

Herriott heaved himself half out of his chair and sat down again.

"Did she?" he exclaimed.

"M'm. Got the jumps, ole chum? Yes,



all fizzled out. They all sez as it was 'is fault, except Mary—my young lady, see—and Mrs. Trigger, the cook. Mrs. Trigger always said as there were faults on both sides, both of 'em bein' a bit 'asty tempered,

she practically admitted to Mary, not knowin' as Mary knew anythin' about it, that—— I say, if you don't 'appen to want them taters, I'll 'ave 'em."

"Oh, drat the potatoes!" exclaimed

Herriott, pushing the dish across. "Have what you like. Go on."

Mr. Bird calmly accepted this eagerness on the part of his *vis-a-vis* as a tribute to his

own powers as a narrator.

"I'll tell you all about it," he said, almost in the tone in which one might promise a small treat to a child. "Miss Rosa and this 'Erriott was courtin' very strong up to about a year ago. They didn't think much of 'im downstairs. All right for tips, but one of the cold, sticky sort, they tells me. Still, not 'aving seen 'im, can't say. I should think there must 'ave been somethin' in 'im, though, for Miss Rosa to get fond of 'im. And all of a sudden he stops comin' to the 'ouse, and there's a paragraph in one of the papers sayin' as it's come unstuck. Get me, Smithy?"

"Yes, I get you. But get on with what

you started telling me."

"All right, all right. I'm comin' to that. Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, Miss Rosa goes about just as usual, and smiles when anybody's lookin' at 'er, but they said as you could some'ow feel that she was 'orribly upset. That was about four months before I come. Well, when I come and sets eyes on Mary, I says to myself, I says, 'Thumbs!' And it was Thumbs too after about six weeks. I booked 'er, you understand.

"Well, after a bit, a fella from the village named Jim Muddock gets a job as undergardener, and he spots Mary, and wouldn't leave 'er alone. And the trouble was that Mary rather liked 'im, although she was booked to me. So I goes to Jim and tells 'im that if he shows 'is face any nearer than the stable-yard I'd clip 'im under the ear. Well, one thing led to another, and I did clip

'im under the ear,—see?"

Herriott interrupted bitterly.

"I don't see what this has to do with——'

"All right. You'll see. Don't keep interruptin', Smithy. Well, Mary got angry, and said as if I 'urt Jim any more she'd never speak to me again. And that got my rag out, because I thought she liked Jim more than she liked me. So I went straight out and clipped 'im under the ear again, which I admit was a bit rough on Jim, 'im not 'avin' done anything to deserve it since I clipped 'is ear the time before.

"Well, Mary kept 'er word. After she'd called me a nasty adenoid and said as it was all off, she didn't speak to me again. Not for days. And I went about like a wet ghost, and my nerves was awful in consequence. In fact, they was so bad that I

started rowing once in front of Miss Rosa.

"I was drivin' 'er out one day, and met one of them charrybanks wot wanted all the road to itself. It nearly nudged me, so I turned and told the driver part of wot I thought of 'im. Nothin' very bad, you know. In fact, I don't suppose there was more than two words as Miss Rosa 'adn't 'eard before. But bad enough. So when I got back I apologised to Miss Rosa and told 'er as my nerves was very bad.

"She wanted to know why, and asked question after question, until it all come out about me and Mary. And what do you think she did then? Why, she sent for Mary and advised 'er to make it up with me.

"'If you're really fond of 'im,' she said, 'you can't afford to quarrel with 'im. It takes two to make a quarrel,' she says, 'but very often just one generous word will settle it. Don't grovel to him, but give 'im a chance to come back if you want 'im back. Some people never give each other that chance, and regret it all the rest of their lives.'

"Well, of course she was talking from experience. Mary could see that, although Miss Rosa didn't know as Mary knew. It was as good as sayin' to anyone in the know that she'd never give this 'Erriott a chance to make it up, and 'e'd never given 'er none. And she give Mary quite a lecture, and said that although it was wrong of me to clip Jim under the ear—especially the time I did it for nothing—it was mostly 'er fault that I went and did it. That's the sort of young lady Miss Rosa is. Some of 'em wouldn't trouble that much about you, or care that much whether you was 'appy or not so long as you did your work. So Mary come straight out to me while I was washin' down the big Daimler an'-it never took me so long to wash a car down in me life, and I was the 'appiest man in the world.

"I'd like to see Miss Rosa 'appy, straight I would. I know some'ow that she ain't. And if this 'Erriott come back to 'er and said, 'Sorry, dear,' or whatever the nibs say after a row, it's a dead cert that he'd be quids in. You don't 'appen to know this 'Erriott, do you? I mean ter say, I dare say you gets about a good deal with your toff, and you might 'appen to meet 'im at one of the

big houses."

There was a pause. Herriott was sitting with his face turned towards the window, with an elbow on the table and his chin cupped in his hand.

"I happen to know him quite well," he

He's

said presently, without looking at Mr. Bird. young enough still to have a chance of learn-"You see, I'm his valet." ing. He's not in any way worthy of your Miss Rosa, if what you've been telling me Mr. Bird choked, and wrestled for a moment with the morsel of steak which had about her is true. I don't tried to enter his bronchial tube. know what she ever saw in him. You wouldn't like him "Go on! You don't mean it! He's your toff! I say, chum, you didn't 'appen yourself. to know about all this wot I've been tellin' one of the cold, you?" stand-offish sort. "I certainly didn't know as very keen about much as you," Herriott admitted. his dignity. "Do you think he wants to fact, if you were come back to 'er?" "I shouldn't wonder. But I can't very well discuss his private affairs with him." "No. Especially if 'e's the sticky, touch-me-not sort. Wot do you find him like?" "He looked straight up at her. This time she saw him; and her smile answered his as swiftly as a smile is answered in the mirror.

Herriott smiled.

"Sometimes," he said, "I have the utmost contempt for him, and sometimes I can't help rather liking the brute. He doesn't seem to have very much sense, but he's to take him for me he'd accept the false position rather than embarrass himself by pointing out to you that he was the master and not the servant. And he'd pretend to himself that he was doing it to save your face."

Mr. Bird stared admiringly.

"You can't arf talk," he said. expect you caught it orf 'im. Yes, I knows 'is sort. Some o' them toffs are funny fellers, but there !-I expect they're all men under their skins. Now, look 'ere, ole chum. I owes Miss Rosa a good turn, and I don't mind doin' myself a bit o' good at the same time. Suppose 'e wants to make it up with Miss Rosa, wouldn't it be worth a bit to you if you was to drop 'im an 'int that she'd be glad to see 'im? Only don't say where you got it from. Then, if you wanted to do the straight thing, we could go 'arves."

Herriott affected to consider.

"It wouldn't be easy," he said. "He'd

shut me up."

"Garn! Don't be afraid of 'im. 'E won't bite. You can only get the push, and it's worth risking if he's one of the generous sort. Why, if he was grateful to you, it might be worth a fiver to split between us, if it came off."

Herriott smiled to himself.

"Meanness isn't one of his vices. He pays well for services rendered. Your share might easily be a fifty-pound note—if it came off."

Mr. Bird's mouth fell open, as if he had

heard some tale of Eldorado.

"Is 'e 'ere—in the town?" he asked in a hushed voice.

" Yes."

"'Ere in the hotel?"

"Very likely."

"Then go and— No, don't 'urry things. That might tear it. Wait until he's in a good temper—backed a good winner or something. Or tell 'im while you're shavin' 'im, so as he won't be able to get away. Only you'll 'ave to make up a story first, about 'ow you 'appen to know that he can be all right with Miss Rosa if he wants to be. You knows my name all right, and you won't be able to 'elp knowin' my address if all goes well. You will tackle 'im, Smithy, won't you? Promise!"

"Yes," said Herriott soberly, "I promise." He got upon his legs. "I must go

now."

"Must you? Well, don't forget. If there's anything to pass along to me I'll be glad of it, but it's really for Miss Rosa's sake I want you to explain things to your toff." Mr. Bird's eyes were shining. "Well, goodbye, chum."

Herriott held out his hand. "Good-bye-chum," he said.

It happened that he had left himself with no time to spare. He walked across the arch and through into the vestibule just as Rosa was descending the stairs from the coffee-room. He looked straight up at her. This time she saw him; and her smile answered his as swiftly as a smile is answered in the mirror. Literally and figuratively, he went half-way to meet her, and they stood together for a long minute on the stairs, calling each other caressingly by name, each saying, "It was all my fault," and then, "No, it wasn't; it was mine." So all in a few moments the mountain dwindled to an ant-heap, and even that was smoothed away.

Five minutes later they were sitting in the

lounge, talking.

"You can't go to your bazaar," he said.
"I want you this afternoon. I've got so much to say. I've got the bus here. We'll get right away into the country. We can't talk in this place."

"But, my dear! I've got a car here too,

and a chauffeur."

"Send them both right away," said Her-

riott—" especially the chauffeur!"

Here he was prompted by consideration for Mr. Bird's feelings and his own. He was wondering which of them would be the more embarrassed when they met again.

"I can run you home," he went on, "but you'll have to explain things to your people before I enter the house. They'll think we're both mad, and I suppose we must be. I don't know whether they have any inkling that you still care for me. I certainly hadn't until to-day."

He paused suddenly and made himself

wince by biting his lip.

"How did you guess?" Rosa whispered. He looked towards the ceiling, as if for inspiration.

"Darling," he said, "I heard it from my

valet, if you want to know."

"Your— Why, you haven't a valet!"
"Nor I have!" Herriott laughed.
"Well, my dear, you'd hardly believe it, but a little Bird told me."





"He took his prey on the wing and always captured his victims, never misjudging his pounce by the merest fraction of an inch."

# SHADOWS OF NIGHT:

# By JAMES POLLARD

OWN in the hollow limb it was dark, but looking up to the exit he could see a small circle of blue sky, with jagged edges where the broken end of the limb narrowed the view; and so, because the day was not yet done, he snuggled his fellows and slept again.

All day long while the sun beat down on the bushlands Nick had clung to the roof of his home awaiting the dusk he loved. With a dozen more of his kind he hung suspended, asleep most of the time, wakening occasionally to peer upward where the circle of blue warned him of day. He was a queer figure hanging there with his fine, delicately wrought skeleton-like wings

wrapped round his tiny mouse-shaped body. Nick was one of many quaint creatures of the wild, and this is the life he lived. . . .

Wakening to find the circle of blue turned to grey, with a chirping call to his fellows he fluttered to the opening and launched himself out. In the rapidly gathering dusk he swung off into the forest, a phantom-like shadow fluttering through the trees. His mates dispersed in all directions, bent on the night's foraging.

Winging his way southward, for perhaps half an hour he flew in almost a straight line, swerving only when a fat locust came his way.

Day faded. The sky became a silver-

studded dome of indigo. In this hour Nick came to the farmhouse which was his favourite haunt. Here the seductive perfumes from the garden and the lights in the windows drew a throng of night insects—moths, flies, beetles, grasshoppers and a swarm of others. Here also came other bats from their homes in the surrounding timber-lands.

For an hour or more he fed, whirring in long tireless curves round and about the house, gorging himself-picking up a brown beetle before it heard him, darting at a moth as it winged toward the open window, seizing and swallowing with little discrimina-The night insects possessed no terrors for him. Even the fearsome rhinoceros beetle with its horny armature was good prey, easily and swiftly torn to pieces by the small lancet-like teeth of the bat. He took his prey on the wing and always captured his victims, never misjudging his pounce by the merest fraction of an inch. Always he came unexpectedly, dropping like a stone from above, looping the loop at a fly droning above him, swerving and darting with a sense of precision that was amazing—and fatal. And the faint quick whirr of his wings suggested shadowy sound; he was a shadow of night.

From the house drifted the murmur of voices, now and then a ripple of soft laughter, the faint musical tinkle of glasses, mingling with the nocturnal music of the bushlands. Time passed. The moon climbed half-way into the sky and, casting soft lights among the shadows of the land, seemed to linger awhile as though listening to the age-old song of the night. The fields and paddocks of the farm were still; the hum of insects vibrated on the air: a slow breeze straved through the trees of the homestead, breathing the eucalyptus of the bush. Not far away, somewhere behind the house, a freshwater creek rippled, its alluring murmur drifting on the night air happy with the subtle singing of the waters wandering past on their hundred-mile journey to the sea.

Nick and his companions were playing now, their appetites appeased. Came a sudden louder whirr of wings, the hiss of a swiftly descending body—and Nick swerved upward in time to escape the marauder. With a flap of his wings the owl turned, rising, and looked round for those night-shadows. They were gone, vanished into the night; and, indeed, if the bird had not been young and foolish he would have known better than to come among them, for his

bulk and general unwieldiness when compared with the bats were a handicap to him in aerial competition with them. None but the swiftest of the swift could capture those quick-flying shadows. One long sweeping circle around the house, keenly watching for sign of life, then the owl veered away in the direction of the barn and stables.

Half an hour passed quietly while the bats, hugging the shaded nooks of the trees, looked out listening and waiting, their eyes pin-points of glittering flame in the shadows. Not until the song of the insect life had grown again to its full throbbing resonance did they venture forth.

For a time they abandoned themselves to play, whirring round joyously, chasing each other through the leafy branches, swerving and whirling in all ways, revelling in their powers of flight. Sometimes when a choice insect came near there would be a race for the prize between the nearest pair. They flitted everywhere—through the garden trees and shrubs, through the verandah, through the open hallway of the house—never at rest, playing the game of the night. They appeared as elusive silhouettes against the mellow sky; they flitted before the moon—black, fantastic forms. . .

Down in the shadows of the verandah a pair of luminous eyes denoted the presence of the house cat, who watched every movement of the flying shapes.

She had been there some time, crouched low, body and muscles tense, waiting for one of the flying bats to approach, motionless except for her eyes, which glinted greenly as they followed the whirling animals. At length came the opportunity. Close to the ground whirred Nick in pursuit of a grasshopper, and the cat sprang—and missed. Nick went up again, the insect gripped between his teeth, and he seemed to laugh as he rose, for there sounded a soft rippling noise, like that made by a straw drawn over finely corrugated card.

Nick disposed of his prey and returned, this time in sheer sport, and a mate followed close. Again the cat sprang. Nick lifted himself slightly, brushing her ears in mid-air, and the following shadow whirred over her eyes. She crouched back—then whipped round as Nick, returning, brushed the fur of her tail. Again and again the bats passed over her, evading her claws with an ease and quickness bewildering, until they seemed to be real shadows at which the cat was springing. She wearied of the game and, swearing sulkily, returned

to the verandah. Thence she looked out on their antics with evil eyes, and for a space the bats played unmolested.

Came the return of the owl. For an

about their night-life. His catch had been small. He was becoming a too-frequent visitor here. Two mice he had accounted for, pouncing down from the blackness of



hour he had sat motionless, high in the darkness of the interior of the barn, his ears strained to catch the slightest rustle of tiny pattering feet, or the faintest mewing, as the timorous dwellers of the building scurried the roof—when on each occasion there was a half-strangled squeak, a flapping of wings as the bird ascended to his perch and frantic rustlings as the other wee folk scampered to their holes in the walls and flooringeerie sounds, befitting the musky, gloomfilled setting of the shed. After the second mishap the barnfolk remained hidden. Instinct told them that danger was still with them. The still silence was charged with lurking death, and they waited for the message that would come to them when the owl was no longer there amid the high beams.

So, because of the long stillness, the owl grew tired of his vigil. His appetite was merely whetted when he glided out into the cool night.

He had not intended to return to the bats' playground, but as he flew from the barn one of those night shadows chanced to flit across the face of the moon directly in his line of vision, and he was lured by the sight in the direction of the house.

He approached silently high in the air, watching the flight of the bats.

Nick, pursuing a lively cricket, passed over the top of a tree. The owl swooped downward—and Nick darted away with a gap torn in the thin membrane of one wing. The owl had gone down with hurtling speed and his wings brushed the grass as he turned to recover his flight.

Came a sudden flash of a pair of fire-lit eyes, a dark body curving in the air upon him, and, as he was borne to the ground, teeth and claws tore into his breast.

The cat crouched over her capture, growling savagely as she glanced round. But none appeared to dispute with her, and she carried the owl away.

The bats were away in the trees again, trembling. The cat they knew for an old acquaintance, with whom they had spent many playful hours through the summer nights. They had long since lost all fear of her. But of the owl they had reason to be afraid, for he was a hunter in the way they hunted, a menacing shadow of the aerial ways of night.

The insects grew bolder and showed themselves on trees and shrubs in the garden, on the posts and railing of the verandah, on the window-sills and in the doorways, voicing full song, lulled to a sense of security due to the prolonged absence of the black fliers.

The night was now more than half gone, the moon low over the western forest. All the lights in the house were long ago extinguished and a vast and brooding peace had settled over the fields. Only the song of the night-folk spoke of the living spirit of the wild—the chirping of crickets and the

shrilling of grasshoppers and the humming of beetles and the whispering of moths in the immediate vicinity—the strumming of a host of frogs away off in a swamp—the low penetrating croak of a mo'poke in a lone tree out in the paddocks—the murmuring of the winds afar back in the forest breathing caresses to the trees—and a million other faint and indescribable sounds through all the land, musically throbbing and impressive with mystery.

The bats turned out to feed again, grown hungry with the advance of night. They whirled to and fro among the insects until these knew fear and sought safety in a general dispersal, flying, hopping, buzzing, humming. As they went the bats followed, flitting among the stragglers silently, swiftly and remorselessly, snapping here, swooping there, turning often to swing back on the unsuspecting—shadowy, ruthless demons.

With the first dim brightening of the eastern sky the night insects vanished, some to the forest to cracks and hollows in the trees, others to the fields of the farm to hide in the grass. The bats were divided, some to the bush on a last lone prowl, others to the creek to wander along sipping of the fresh, sweet water.

A greater peace settled upon the homestead. Down under the verandah in rear a scattered litter of feathers marked where the house cat had feasted.

Winging homeward Nick travelled slowly, for there were many choice tit-bits to be gathered during the first half-hour of morn-When he came to his hollow limb he found all his mates there before him. Fluttering down to his place at the head of the line, he jostled his friends happily, then turned to his toilet. Diligently and carefully he brushed and preened his close short fur, tenderly licked and washed the edges of the gash in his wing and cleansed himself thoroughly. It was a quaint scene, this, a dozen or so bats cleaning and brushing their coats, bathed in the cool and refreshing dew, and chirping to one another. When the last had completed his toilet they slept, snuggled close.

The grey in the east turned to dull gold; the sky overhead paled; the dull colouring brightened to a full golden yellow—then the dazzling rim of the sun topped the earthline.

And Nick, sentinel of the house, awakened to bid good-morning to the dawn-lit circle of sky that marked the entrance to his home, then snuggled his fellows and slept again.



COMFORTING.

"Oh, don't polish your apple with your hanky, dear."

"It's all right, ma; it's a dirty one !"

# THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

# A RULING PASSION. By Leonard Denzell.

"I'm sorry," said the conductor.

"I can shake with you on that," said I. "I'm all broken up."

By now—twenty-nine pennies take some time to count out—I was a hundred yards beyond my stop. However, the conductor was quite nice about it and didn't charge me for that. I cascaded the money into my overcoat pockets and dropped off. I picked up and wiped my hat, then felt for the cigarette I so urgently needed.

I had a considerable list to starboard, so I transferred tenpence to my left-hand pocket. I now felt like a pack-mule, but still a bit more my own man. I extracted matches from an inner pocket. An cdd penny had worked itself into the box . . .

Of course my army education was a help in the crisis; but the military idiom has a certain monotony. I found myself envying a wellknown poet, who could pay a cabby his legal fare and then swear him down.

Then I heard a slightly hesitating voice say, "Excuse me, sir, but could you possibly change me half a crown?"

The voice came, not—as I at first thought—from Heaven, but from a little grey man with a

walrus moustache and a fatigued soft felt hat. He looked rather like a butterfly hunter, or one of those elderly men who sail model yachts on the Round Pond, but his eye held fire—fire to lead a forlorn hope or quell a butler.

to lead a forlorn hope or quell a butler.
"Changing half-crowns," I said, "is practically my profession. But, mark you, only in pennies."

"In pennies!" he said with real emotion.
"I didn't think it possible."

"It seems hardly probable, does it? But here they are. Where's the half-crown?"

It was night-time, but I didn't so much as bite the half-crown. I started handing out coppers before he should change his mind. It was rather like coaling at sea, for the little man was already moving off at a brisk pace. But in time he had the lot; then he left me abruptly and dashed down a narrow side street like a rabbit into a burrow.

Half-way down he stopped at a stamp machine. He inserted a penny, carefully tore off the stamp and threw it on to the ground. He put in another penny, tore off another stamp . . . and threw it on to the ground. By the time I'd reached him he was doing the thing like drill; pushing in the coin with the right, tearing off the stamp with the left, throwing down smartly with the left whilst feeling for the

next coin with the right. He was counting

"Nine thirty-eight, nine thirty-nine, nine

forty . . ."

I thought I would try tact. Tact, or a cokehammer, seemed indicated, and I hadn't the hammer. "I wouldn't do that, sir," I said, "not on a night like this."

He turned on me a cold glare. "Did I say

nine forty?"

and play it by yourself. Fifty-one, fifty-two, fifty-three . . . ."

It seemed wrong to leave him, for all he had a walrus moustache. I walked away a little to consider the next move. When I returned the stamps, "thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallombrosa," formed a drift round his feet.

"A charming idea," I said, "the philatelist's wedding. The happy pair went away in a

shower of stamps. The bride's dress prettily trimmed with stamp edging and the groom looked —as usual—a little ungummed."

He handed me an electric torch. "Hold this, fool. Turn it this way." His brow was beaded and his eve blazed. "I believe I've got it."

"Ullo! Ullo! What's all this?"

I turned to confront a monument in blue.

"It's all right, officer, I'm looking after this gentle-man." That meant a shilling, but it was well spent, for the little man was worth watching. "The last penny," he groaned; "four and ninepence and it hasn't turned. up yet."

The last penny was a little bent and stuck in the slot. He took off his boot and hammered it in with his heel. Then with a croon of delight he detached the stamp. Holding it as a devotee might a relic, he placed it in his pocket-

book, buttoned his coat and overcoat and turned to me with a smile of enthusiastic affection.

"Thank you, thank you, sir. I shall never forget you-nor this day."

"I shan't need a memory course myself." "I will explain." Relaxed and kindly, he took my arm. "It's this way. These rolls of

stamps have a defect."



A SAD CASE,

FIRST CRITIC: Portrait of the artist's wife-h'm! Second Critic: Poor thing—gone all to pieces!!

" Yes."

"Well, then, hold your tongue or I shall lose count. Forty-one, forty-two, three . . ."

I let him run up to fifty and then tried

"You know, sir, I think that's about score. I never play more than fifty myself."

"I don't care what you play. Run away

"What do you mean? They'll go on letters, won't they?"

"Naturally. What's that to do with it?"

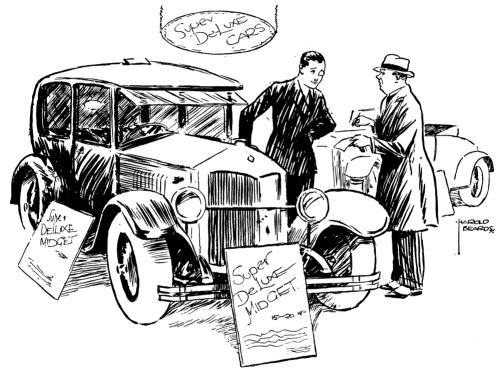
"I thought that was what they were for."

"Good heavens! What an idea! You don't understand. One of these stamps—it's the four hundred and ninety-fifth from the end—has the perforation cutting into the design. Nobody, no philatelist, knows this but myself. All the other rolls have been used up. The stamps have been wasted—put on letters. The rest of the rolls are being withdrawn to-night and will be pulped. This stamp—this treasure I wear next my heart—is unique. There's not another like it in the world.

I displayed those virtues, sir. All day have I watched this machine, keeping tally of the stamps withdrawn.

"By seven-thirty my hopes were high; four hundred and twenty-five stamps had been taken and my goal was in sight. Then—you will recall—the weather changed. It began to rain heavily and a degenerate public preferred the shelter of the post office. I waited eagerly for it to close its doors.

"But, alas! the weather continued inclement; only a few poor stragglers bought stamps, and those were mostly halfpenny ones. I was in despair—I had only two and threepence in coppers—when I encountered you. You



LET ME DREAM AGAIN.

"You sold me a car about a week ago."

"Yes, sir, how do you like it?"

"I want you to repeat everything you said about the car again. I'm getting discouraged."

"But listen, sir. I only learnt of this to-day. I had to get that stamp . . . but how to do it? This is a busy office and I suspected that a new roll would be inserted this morning. It was—at eleven o'clock. Sir, imagine that moment! A thousand mad schemes went through my mind. I thought of knocking the official down; but I am not made for violence—it revolts me."

"And it doesn't often come off."

"True. I thought of snatching the roll; but I do not run well and the place was crowded. Bribery suggested itself; but bribery is expensive, it attracts attention, and rarely succeeds. No, sir, patience and cunning were my only hope.

seemed—in spite of your language—express from Heaven. It only shows how ill we judge our fellow-men."

"Don't mention it. It was a pleasure."

"I must. I apologise sincerely. You see before you a supremely happy man. The King himself hasn't one of those stamps."

"I can imagine it," I said, glancing down at the pavement dotted over with white squares. "After all, the Privy Purse is limited and he gives a lot to charity. So that's the reason for the whole fanted?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"The bobbery."

"I don't quite grasp."

"A certain . . . may I say . . . eccentricity, on your part?"

"Man! Have you no imagination?"

"Not much, but it's growing." And turning on my heel-which rested on his stockinged foot -I left him.

JEAN: Ted's always first to put his hands in his pockets when money is needed.

DORA: Yes, and he keeps them there until the danger's over.

ROMANTIC YOUNG THING: When I come out on to the front after dinner and gaze at the moonlit sea, I feel too full for words.

PRACTICAL YOUTH: You wouldn't feel like that if you stayed at our boarding-house.

HAIRPINS were among the Roman articles discovered at Caerleon. Very old-fashioned people, the Romans.



What does this sinister announcement on a menu mean—"Half fresh lobster, 4s."?



A USE FOR EVERYTHING.

PROSPECTIVE STEPMOTHER: It will be nice for you, dear, won't it, having a woman about the house? SMALL Boy: Yes, you really want women's garters for catapult clastic!

CHILD: May I have a dark supper to-night? MOTHER: What do you mean, dear?

CHILD: You gave me a light supper last night and I didn't like it at all.



NELLIE: Haven't I a small foot? Have you ever seen anything smaller?

MARY: Yes, your shoes.



ISABEL: I don't intend to be married until after I'm 25.

MARY: I don't intend to be 25 until after I'm married.

A BEAUTY expert says that if shingling goes out of fashion thousands of hairdressers will go bankrupt. They would be without a bob in the world.



The Boy: Can you cook?
The Girl: I want to know something more important. Can you supply the things to cook?

DEALER: If you buy this car, sir, we'll put on the initials free.

BUYER: It's not the initial cost. It's the upkeep.



A DISCREPANCY SOMEWHERE.

FIRST LAWYER: What did you get out of that will case? SECOND LAWYER: Two thousand pounds.
FIRST LAWYER: But I thought he left more than that.



Nervous Lady (to sportsman in railway carriage): A shooting stick, is it? Well, I only hope it won't go off while I'm in this carriage!

### DOMESTIC BISQUES.

### By E. H. Lacon Watson.

This is, I admit, a novel idea of mine, and it may easily be that the Great British Public will scoff at it, from lack of understanding. But I do think it might (properly utilised) do something to solve that perpetual conundrum, "How are we to Keep our Servants?" I am convinced it would make for a greater harmony in domestic life. It might, I maintain, be useful in a multitude of ways. But I should suggest trying it on the domestic staff first.

I am presuming you know what a Bisque means. I am not now referring to the variety of thick scup, commonly alleged to be made of

lessly and misses the first. You hole out, and reflect.

"I think I'll take a bisque here," you say.
"That leaves you with that for the half."

At which, of course, he promptly misses the return putt. Who wouldn't, in such a position? And you are still all square, instead of being one down at the turn. Most unfair—but singularly comforting.

I remember, at the ancient foundation where I spent my school-days, they used in the past to have an excellent system something akin to this of bisques. If by any curious chance an Inferior (as we younger ones were termed) happened to do a good turn to one of the elect (a Prefect, let us say, or anyone in authority



NEED FOR CARE.

"I wish you wouldn't grin at baby so much, dear; his face is getting quite distorted—babies are so imitative!"

lobster, which they are so fond of giving me in the 3s. 6d. dinner at my club. I refer rather to the extra point, to be claimed when you choose, that is part of your handicap at certain games. Of French origin, I fancy. Honest Britons, in the old days when anything French was suspect, preferred to spell the word "bisk." No doubt the great Napoleon turned uneasily on his throne when (or if) he heard of this.

Taken from the French or not, it is indubitably a pleasing form of handicap. I like the suddenness, the manifest unfairness of the bisque. The giver of odds is plodding away, thinking of nothing in particular, comfortably satisfied that he has got you down. Two strokes for the hole, perhaps. He putts a little care-

over him) the lion might be moved to reward the humble mouse.

"Take a ticket," he would say.

And, gratefully enough, for we were taught to be grateful in those days, we took it. Nothing passed, as a matter of fact: there was no sign or token. Purely a matter of memory, on both sides. But if, some weeks later, we were called up for judgment before the said authority it might conceivably be of use (I say "might," for memories are deceitful) to remind him that we held one of these intangible privileges. On occasion I have known them to prove of considerable value. Almost like a plenary indulgence in the good old days when such things were marketable.



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# CONSUMPTION

### IS IT A MIRACLE?

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In effect, this was a species of bisque.

What I meant to propose, when I started writing, was this simple plan. Add one or two bisques to the wages of your domestics in lieu of solid cash. I am sure some such arrangement would tend to keep employees in good temper—and induce them to serve us for a smaller fee. Suppose that instead of a salary of eight pounds a week you were offered seven pounds and one bisque! Any young fellow of the right spirit would unquestionably accept the second offer. Once a week he could then kick over the traces, in a harmless manner, and go scathless. Domestic servants, paid by the

WAITER (hinting): The price on the bill doesn't include the waiter, sir."

CUSTOMER: Oh, I hope not. I'm no cannibal.

Dr. Watson: Good heavens, Holmes! This murder was committed with a hatpin. That proves, doesn't it, that a woman is guilty of this awful crime?

SHERLOCK HOLMES: Tut, tut, my dear Watson! You are far off the track. The hatpin proves that the curator of some museum has done this thing.



"He said he was going to kiss me directly I stopped talking."

"What did you do?"

"Said I'd never speak to him again."

month, would rate one bisque, I imagine, at the rate of ten shillings off their wages, at least.

I do not say they would always use their bisques. But how delightful, how soothing to the ruffled nerves, to feel they were there, lying in reserve! A morning in bed, or an evening at the pictures, whenever they chanced to feel that way.

I suggest to our anxious economists that they might try the offer of a bisque or two, monthly, when engaging their next cook or housemaid.



"POULTRY show surprise," announces a headline. Yes, but how?

HE: You know absence makes the heart grow fonder.

SHE: Also presents, dear!

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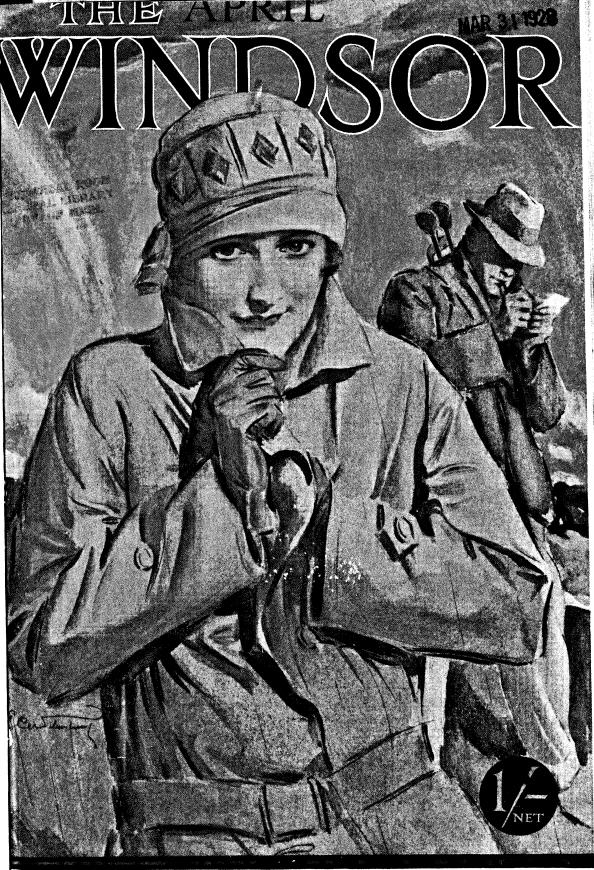
SHE: I'll have you know I have a mind of my own.

HE: Well, nobody's going to lay claim to it!

888

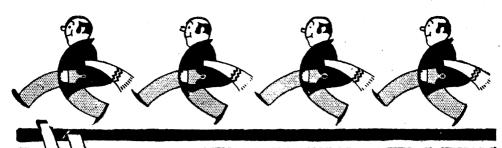
Vera: Is your car insured?

TED: I don't know. I'm reading my policy right now.



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<sup>&</sup>quot;'Did you wish to see the church? . . . "'Quite a humble place, of course, but I do venture to think ra-ther beautiful, ra-ther beautiful,"" (See page 506.)



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   ■

The first of a new series of Detective Stories of which that bland, childishly innocent "investigator," MR. FORTUNE, is the central figure.

In the hospital corridor two men stood waiting. A door opened and the round face of Mr. Reginald Fortune looked out at them. They followed him into a little room where a man lay in bed. The nurse was holding a spouted cup to his lips. His head was bandaged. What little could be seen of his face was grey. Mr. Fortune sat down and felt for his pulse. "Well, well. Another little drink didn't do you any harm, George," he smiled. "Now you

tell us all about it and we'll know what to do next."

The other two men had found chairs close by the bed, and one had a notebook open.

The bandaged head turned away. "I'm for it, doctor," a thick voice said. "You can't do me no good."

"George! George!" said Mr. Fortune gently. "Have you got anybody you care about? I mean, the fellows that served you

like this want looking after, or they'll be

making things nasty for her."

The body stirred, the bandaged head moved and groaned. Mr. Fortune looked at the nurse and the cup was put to the pale lips again. "Wotsh yer boverin' me for?" the thick voice said. "I dunno none of 'em. Take my dyin' oaf I don't. But it was all fair. I ain't got nuffink against any of 'em, s'elp me, I ain't."

"My poor chap," Mr. Fortune said gently.

"But, I say-

"Oh, Gawd, leave me be," the man groaned. "I never done you no 'arm, doctor. Can't cher leave me die quiet?"

Mr. Fortune's hand stayed some moments on the pulse. Then with one quiet movement he withdrew it, rose and turned. He shook his head at the two men, he waved them out. The nurse and he spoke together softly.

Half an hour later one of those two men, Superintendent Bell, was making his report to the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. Mr. Fortune joined them, to be received by a cock of a quizzical eyebrow familiar to the friends of the Hon. Sidney Lomas. "Well, Reginald, so there was nothing doing after all?"

"No." Mr. Fortune's round face had a child-like gravity. "He won't speak. He's

going to die to-night."

"God help him," said Superintendent

"Oh, quite," Lomas agreed. "But he did speak: he told you he was damaged in a fair fight: no foul play: no complaints."

"Yes. That's what he told us. Poor chap. He's a good fellow in his fashion."

The Superintendent shook a solemn head. "Been in with a nasty crowd, sir. Done some dirty work in his time. But he is a good plucked one. I don't mind owning I didn't think he'd die so game."

"Knows he's dying, does he?"

"Oh, Lord, yes," said Mr. Fortune wearily. "He made up his mind he was going to die as soon as he was conscious."

"No reason why he should be afraid to tell the truth, then. If he says he was smashed in a fair fight and nobody's to blame, we might as well believe him."

"It would save trouble, wouldn't it?" said Mr. Fortune. "Sorry, Lomas. I shall have to give evidence at the inquest. And I'm going to say he was sandbagged and kicked to death."

"Though he said there was no foul play."

Lomas frowned. Lomas lit a cigarette. "That makes rather a nasty business of it, Reginald."

'Yes, I think so."

"He was afraid of the fellows that killed

him even when he was dying."

"Well-afraid of something if he told the truth or hoping something if he didn't. He has a wife, you know. She came to see him this afternoon. You'd better look after Mrs. George Akers."

"And what's the theory, Reginald?"

" He knows who smashed him. He knows why he was smashed. He won't tell us, because his wife said he mustn't. Well, the inference is, somebody's been getting at her."

Lomas inhaled smoke. "That is to say, we've hit up against somebody in a large

way of business?"

"Yes. Yes. It could be. What do you

know about George Akers?"

Lomas shrugged and looked at Bell. "Loafer round the West End, sir. Only been through our hands for hustling with pickpockets. But we have had a notion he was working for some of the dope merchants."

"Hasn't been working for you, by any

chance?" said Mr. Fortune.

Bell shook his head. "No, sir. One of our men did try to make something of him. This dope business has been getting out of hand. I don't know where the supplies are coming from."

"Somebody in a large way of business," Mr. Fortune murmured. "Do you remember that case in Paris, Bell? Gentleman in the dope industry who used to say to his employees, 'The police won't kill you for refusing to inform, but if you do, I shall'; and it was so."

"But Akers didn't inform, sir," Bell

objected.

'No. But he may have threatened. He may have run rusty. He may have got to know too much. He may have declined some unusually dirty job."

Lomas lit another cigarette.

devil," he said.

"But what's it all come to, sir?" Bell protested. "He's quarrelled with his gang and they've smashed him and got at his wife to hush it up. We do have these cases."

"I wonder," Mr. Fortune murmured. Bell looked at him, dubious, resigned, patient. "I was only hintin' there's some brains in this one, Bell."

Bell made a mournful noise. "Some clever chap behind it all, sir?" he said wearily. He turned to Lomas. "Somebody in a large way of business, like you said, sir?" He shook his head at the two theorists. "It don't happen much, does it? My way of thinking, all we can do is to work over Akers' gang and see what we can make of his wife."

Lomas nodded and the Superintendent went his heavy way. Lomas looked at Mr. Fortune. "He's right, you know, Reginald. It don't happen. When did you meet an organiser of crime?"

"Well, it's not much in my way," said Mr. Fortune. "I never studied crime as an industry. What I get is generally a work of art: individual enterprise and fancy. I don't think I ever met a co-operative murder before. I don't like it." He looked plaintive, he wandered out.

Superintendent Bell's labours discovered nothing more. George Akers' gang was unanimously dumb. The widow came to the inquest, a waif of the streets in decent black, and with tears related that her man had gone to the races as usual-he got his living racing—and never came home again: when she saw him in hospital he said he had been drinking and got into a scrap with some fellows: he didn't know who they were: she didn't know: George didn't have no enemies she ever heard of: not George: she wept herself out of the box. She went unchallenged. The police could offer no other evidence but Mr. Fortune's, and on that the jury gave a verdict of murder against persons unknown. And George Akers was buried, with his widow a lonely mourner, and before the week was out she had gone from the one room in Soho which was her home and was seen no more.

Superintendent Bell shook a sage head. "You can't make anything of it, sir. I dare say she knew something. I dare say she didn't. She's the sort to pick up with another man before her husband was cold. Maybe we'll come on the truth in a year or two when we're looking for something else. Maybe we won't. We do get these cases."

"I wonder what George thinks about it," said Mr. Fortune.

But his attention was then distracted. Superintendent Bell's telephone rang. Superintendent Bell listened to a long narrative. "Landomere?" said the Superintendent. "Spell it. Landomere. Right. I'll come round." He turned the pages of one book of reference and another. "Do you know anything of Gerard Landomere, Mr. Fortune?"

"No. He doesn't sound real. What's he done?"

"Cut his throat."

"That does give him a certain interest."
"Would you like to have a look, sir?"
said Bell eagerly.

"Oh, Bell, did I ever?" Mr. Fortune

sighed, and went with him.

Mr. Gerard Landomere lived in a block of flats behind Piccadilly, which provided service for those who wanted it. Mr. Landomere did, his valet having been dismissed the week before. The man who came up to valet him that morning had found him in bed with blood about his throat and a razor in his hand. He was already dead. The steward of the flats telephoned for the police and a doctor. The doctor said it was suicide.

"That's what we've got, sir," said the Inspector in Landomere's rooms. "I was just going through his things."

"Mr. Fortune would like to see the body,"

Bell said.

But Mr. Fortune was in no hurry. He looked about the room, which was hung with coloured prints of the eighteenth century, sporting and erotic. It had chairs of comfort and some good pieces of old furniture and silver. "Who was Gerard Landomere, Inspector?" he murmured.

"What you'd call a man about town, sir. No occupation. He's lived here years. They say he was a very quiet gentleman. Best of tenants. Bit behind with his payments just now, but nothing to signify."

ments just now, but nothing to signify."

"Landomere," Mr. Fortune murmured.

"No, he doesn't sound real, does he?"

He turned away into the bedroom and Bell followed.

Gerard Landomere lay in a smoothly ordered bed. The clothes covered him to his chest. Above that was blood. His pyjamas were undone at the neck, his head lay back on the pillow, and on the left of his neck the flesh gaped. His right arm was bent across him and the hand still grasped a razor.

Bell drew in his breath. "Ah, he died quiet, sir," he said softly. "God forgive him"

Reggie Fortune bent over the body. . . . His fingers went into the breast pocket of the pyjamas. He drew out a folded paper. It was stained and wet with blood, but the writing on it could be read.

DEAR SIR,-

Confirming our conversation, I have to say that my friends cannot see their way to settle the matter

for a smaller sum than two thousand pounds (£2,000). I hope to receive payment from you without further delay. Otherwise it will be necessary for us to lay the facts before the parties mentioned with the consequences to your position which I am sure you fully appreciate.

Yours faithfully,

A

It was written in a flowing clerk's hand. The paper was a sheet torn from a pad and bore no address.

"That's blackmail plain enough," said Bell. "He got that and he daren't fight it. There was no way out for him but the razor."

"Yes. That is the obvious inference," Mr. Fortune murmured. He went back to the body and stood looking down at it. His pink, round, boyish face displayed a plaintive surprise. "Anything strike you, Bell?"

"There's this valet, sir."

"The valet who was conveniently dismissed last week. Yes. I should look him up. But I meant here." He waved a hand at the dead man on the bed.

"It looks a straight case to me, sir."

"Well, where's the envelope?"

Bell considered that. Bell looked about the room. "Not here, anyway. But it needn't be. Might be in the sitting-room. I'll ask Logan."

"One moment. What about the light?"
The light?" Bell's brain struggled.

"I don't follow, sir."

"Well, you know, this blood was shed before dawn. Were the lights on when the body was found? Ask Logan that too."

Inspector Logan had been told the lights were all off. As for the envelope, it was certainly not in the sitting-room. The gentleman didn't seem to have kept any papers at all.

Bell came back to the bedroom. Bell looked at Mr. Fortune. "That's queer,

anyway."

"Yes. Curiouser and curiouser. He abolishes all his papers—but he cherishes a blackmailing letter—though he abolishes the envelope. His throat was cut in the night. And the lights were all off this

morning."

"It is odd about the papers," Bell said slowly. "You're thinking somebody has been in the flat, sir. But this is no proof, to my mind. The papers—well, we've got to suppose the poor chap didn't hardly know what he was about last night. And the lights—I don't see anything in that. He wouldn't want light to cut his throat. I suppose he got his razor and switched off

and died in the dark. Sort of natural to want to."

"Referrin' to the razor—" said Reggie.
"He used a safety on his lawful occasions.
It's on the dressing-table. An old friend.
But he also had a case of razors handy.
That's very unusual. And the case is new,
Bell."

Bell took it up. "Looks pretty new. But it would be. If he used a safety, he'd have to buy another to kill himself."

"Yes, that would have to be considered," said Reggie in a dry, hard voice which

startled Superintendent Bell.

"I don't get what you mean about the razors being new, sir." Bell came to the body and looked at the razor clasped in the dead hand. "Nothing unusual in a suicide buying a weapon. This is one of that set on the table." He touched the dead fingers gingerly. "The hand's stiff and hard grasping it."

"I noticed that," said Reggie meekly.

"Anything else interest you, Bell?"

"No, sir. Everything seems to fit in. Clear case of suicide to my mind. I don't know what else there is."

"Blood's rather dark, isn't it?"

Bell stared at him. Bell looked down at the bed and drew back with something of horror on his solemn face. "Good Lord, Mr. Fortune, I couldn't tell. It's just blood to me. What do you think's wrong with it?"

"I don't know," Reggie said, contemplating the body. He turned away. "Found an answer to everything, haven't we, Bell? But there's several curious things. Let's see

if Logan's got any more."

Inspector Logan had got nothing at all. The old walnut bureau contained no papers, not so much as a cheque-book. Inspector Logan considered that Mr. Landomere had taken good care not to leave anything behind.

"Looks as if he had something pretty nasty to hide," said Bell.

Reggie, wandering about the room, had come to a halt before a glass and a spirit decanter. Both were empty. Inspector Logan grinned. "He had a good drink before he went out, sir, didn't he?"

"Yes. Yes. That is indicated," Reggie murmured. He was smelling decenter and

glass.

"It was whisky he used, sir," Logan

helped him.

"Thanks. I did recognise it." He put down decanter and glass and still wandered about the room, looking closely at the prints, the furniture, and stopped before an oak chest. "Some rare old things he had. That's sixteenth-century." He bent over it and rose with a sigh of respectful admiration. "Well, well. I shall have to do some work with the body. Have it removed, will you? I want the bed-clothes too. And that glass and decanter, Bell."

"Very good, sir. Any points you want us

to work on?"

"Oh, the obvious. Did anybody come to the flat last night? Who are Mr. Landomere's friends, who's his banker, who's he been talking to on the telephone? You know all that. Better get hold of the discharged valet. He ought to be interesting."

"There's nothing else, sir?"

Reggie was looking at the few pieces of old silver on the bureau. "Oh, my aunt!" he said softly. He turned in his hands a small cubical box. "Look at that"—he held it out on his palm to Bell.

Bell poked at it, peered at it. "What is

it, Mr. Fortune?"

"It's a pouncet-box."

"That don't help me. What's it for?"
"It was made to hold Elizabethan smelling-salts. That isn't wholly relevant. But it's engraved with a lion who has the body of a fish. See?"

"Yes, I see. But what about it?"

"Mr. Landomere was real after all," said Reggie. "I'll take this. Good-bye."

Inspector Logan gazed at his Superintendent. "I don't get what he means about Landomere being real," he grumbled. "And a fish lion! What's the sense of that? Sounds like he was being funny."

"This case isn't going to be funny, my lad," said Bell. "Give me that 'phone:"

It was late in the next day when Reggie came into the room of the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, who was being brisk with papers and a secretary. "Hullo, Lomas. Pressin' on to closin'-time? Something attempted, something done, has earned a night's repose."

"You're aggressively cheerful, Reginald," said Lomas. "I expect you to justify it," and he got rid of the secretary. "Well?"

"Have you found Mrs. Akers?"

Lomas sighed and gave him a cigar. "No, Reginald, we have not found Mrs. Akers. We are rather busy with the Landomere case. Be relevant as soon as possible."

"I always am. Have you found Lando-

mere's valet?"

"Not that I know of." He took up his telephone and talked to Superintendent

Bell. "No, not yet. Logan thinks he is on the track of the fellow." He paused. "Why do you revert to the Akers case,

Reginald?

"Certain similarity. Hadn't you noticed it? Two men die violent deaths. Care in each case to obliterate the reason, and in each case the person who might know something fades away."

"And certain differences. A tout is kicked to death in a street-row. A man of

means cuts his throat in his flat."

Bell came into the room. "But the police know nothing about either of them," said Reggie cheerfully. "Or do you, Bell?"

Bell smiled. "I had to check Logan for saying you were being funny, sir. But were you pulling my leg about the lion fish?"

"Oh my, Bell! Did I ever?" Reggie felt in his pockets and produced the pouncet-box. "There you are. Beautiful piece, isn't it, Lomas? Lion's head on a fish's body. Lion of the sea. Lion de mer. Landomere."

"Landomere's arms, eh?" Lomas said.

"Well, what about it?"

"First inference, Mr. Landomere's name is genuine and old. Lookin' into the matter, we find that the Landomeres were an ancient family in Downshire, founded by an eminent pirate of the Middle Ages. Hence the name, Lion of the Sea. They did a little in the profession later and eked it out by smuggling. As times got quieter, they decayed. They're supposed to have died out last century. I can't trace this fellow, but he'd stuck to a few of the old family things."

"All very interesting, Reginald," Lomas yawned. "I'm not compiling a history of the family of Landomeres. If you'll tell me

how he died, we might get on."

"Good Gad!" said Lomas.

"What, sir?" Bell cried. "Cut his

throat in his sleep?"

"Yes. Yes. In a way. He didn't really cut his own throat. It happened like this. Sometime in his absence his flat was entered and some chloral hydrate put into his whisky. He came back, had his drink and went to bed. While he lay in a drugged sleep, his flat was entered again by somebody, probably two men or more. They brought that case of razors, they brought the blackmailing letter. They put a razor in his hand and so cut his throat. They put the letter in his pocket. Then they took all his papers, switched off the light and

quit. Thus wiping out Mr. Landomere and all traces in the flat of how he'd been living and leaving quite good evidence that he destroyed his papers and committed suicide in fear of blackmail. Very thoughtful bit of crime. Like the extinction of George Akers."

"Dear me, Reginald, you surpass yourself," Lomas smiled. "This is very ingenious, but more than a little conjectural. Guessing isn't evidence."

"Thank you for these kind words."

"My dear fellow, I've the greatest respect for your opinion. But after all, an opinion isn't facts. You can't possibly know all this. It's a work of imagination constructed with very scanty material."

"You think so? I bet you the jury

won't."

"Great heavens, you're not going to tell

this tale at the inquest?"

"I'm going to tell the jury that Superintendent Bell pointed out to me the man had died very quiet: that his blood was dark and his lungs congested as if he had been poisoned with chloral hydrate: that I found traces of chloral in the empty glass and the empty decanter. There's the facts, Lomas. And the opinion to be formed upon them, the only possible opinion, is that a strong dose of chloral was put in his whisky so that he should be insensible while his throat was cut."

"Your point," Lomas agreed. "Sorry, Reginald. You are very neat. But I don't see my way. If a murderer could drug his whisky, why bother with this dangerous

business of cutting his throat?"

"Well, I don't know why Landomere had to die. But I take it there were urgent reasons. The murderer had to make sure. Any poison Landomere wouldn't notice wouldn't kill him quick. A little sleeping draught—then his throat would be cut and everything arranged to look like suicide—and it was all over in one night."

"And if you hadn't happened to see him, sir, the other doctor would have passed it for suicide and we shouldn't have bothered

about it," said Bell.

"And they'd have lived happily ever after," said Mr. Fortune. "Perhaps they will now. Are we going to have another verdict against persons unknown, Lomas?"

"Another, sir?" Bell stared. "Oh, you mean that Akers case. I don't see any

likeness."

"Both wiping out a man. Both very cleverly managed. Both givin' evidence of

organisation behind—and some chap with a will."

"What have we got?" Lomas lay back in his chair. "The Akers case has petered out. Landomere was murdered by somebody who knew his ways and could get into his flat. The valet is indicated. Logan's after him. Got his description. Got some of his pals. What about Landomere's life? He belonged to several decent clubs. We can't hear of any intimate friends. His bank account's very small. He had no capital to speak of. No visible means of support. His pass-book shows money paid in irregularly, nothing suggestive in the cheques he drew. They haven't noticed any particular visitors in the flats. only thing worth looking into we get from the telephone exchange is that he rang up a solicitor last week. The girl remembered that because the call lasted so long. Mr. Howard Fyle. Not known to the police. We'll have a talk with Mr. Howard Fyle. Anything else, Reginald?"

"Well, I was thinking of a quiet day or

two in Downshire."

The next morning he arrived in a car at the suburban home of Superintendent Bell, who looked at it critically while the chauffeur stowed his suitcase. "Got a new one, Mr. Fortune?"

"A hireling. You never know, you know. Somebody might recognise mine. And I thought we'd better be incognito. Two gentlemen from Canada having a look round the old country: Mr. French and Mr. Brown."

Bell laughed. "All right, sir. Have you brought any false whiskers?" He looked at Mr. Fortune's pink round face affectionately. "I'd like to see you in whiskers."

"You have a nasty mind, Bell."

The car ran through long miles of suburban country, climbed to the wind on the hills and raced down to orchards and mellowing corn. The sprawling county town of Downshire slumbered between market days. They put up the car and ordered lunch and walked through yawning streets to the Chief Constable. But he was brisk enough, a little man with a knowing eye. "I'm not going to say I'm glad to see you, Mr. Fortune. What's the trouble?"

"You don't, you know. You haven't. But do you know anyone called Landomere?"

The Chief Constable put his head on one side. "That suicide case, eh? I was wondering about it myself. I didn't know there was a Landomere alive."

"Ah, the family's faded right out?"

"Absolutely. We always think of them as one of the dead mediæval names." He turned to a map on the wall. "That was their great place, Castle Counter, on a hill in the marsh by Lythe. They had a big manor here at Ashurst. All around was Landomere country. That's all I know about them. If you ask me, I wonder where this chap picked up the name." The Chief Constable looked more knowing than ever. "Bill Smith calling himself Keith Howard—what?"

"Yes, that is one of the possibilities," said Mr. Fortune.

But after lunch the hireling car ran on from the woodland to the marsh, to the knoll of sandstone above the winding, muddy river where Castle Counter stood.

There was not much of it. The shell of the keep stood stark against the sea wind, the rest was tumbled stones glowing red with valerian. Mr. Fortune wandered among the ruins. Bell came up with him where he stood contemplating the door of the keep. "There you are," he said. A coat of arms was carved in the crumbling stone and the lion fish could still be made out. "The home of the Landomeres."

"They don't use it much now," Bell chuckled.

Mr. Fortune glanced at him. "No. No. Well placed, wasn't it? Just over the harbour."

"It's all very jolly, sir," said Bell. "But

I don't know what we're doing."

"We're trying everything. Now we're going to try if there's an inn at Lythe that has a conscience. And I don't mind tellin' you it's a desperate adventure."

But they found one, an inn of shocking Victorian structure which defiled the mouldering beauty of that ancient port, yet understood comfort and by its tea-cakes, as Mr. Fortune pointed out, justified faith in human nature.

Thus comforted, he went forth to the post office and made a trunk call; emerging thereafter he took Bell's arm and turned away out of the town on the lonely road to the harbour. "I got Lomas," he said softly. "He's seen the solicitor. He thinks Mr. Fyle is the safety first, family business kind of lawyer, quite respectable. Mr. Fyle says he did some trifling job for Landomere, about a bill, years ago and hadn't heard of him since till last week, when Landomere rang him up. Landomere was very confused, but as far as he could make out

wanted advice about an attempt at blackmail. He arranged an appointment and Landomere didn't keep it. That's all he knows."

"Sounds straight enough."

"Yes. Yes. They're looking into Mr. Fyle, of course. They haven't got the valet yet, but Logan's close on him."

"Then he's doing more good than we are," said Bell grimly. "We don't get very

close to anything, do we?"

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. He stopped and gazed at a topsail schooner, the only ship by the grass-grown quay of Lythe. She was unloading deals. "A Swede, is she?"

"I'm no good at flags," Bell shrugged, but he saw Mr. Fortune considering the schooner with a curious attention. "One of these chaps with the timber will know."

"Don't worry." Reggie drew him away and they strolled back to the town. After a few hundred yards, Bell glanced at him. "Yes, I think so," Reggie murmured. Bell stopped and began to light a pipe. He had trouble with matches. A man passed them at a swinging pace, a big fellow in plus-fours. He vanished among some boat-building sheds.

"Looks like it," Bell frowned. "But if we are being followed, somebody's got on to us mighty quick."

"Yes, that is so," Reggie smiled. "In the home town of the Landomeres. I told you we'd better be incognito, Mr. Brown."

"Do you mind leaving this to me?" said Bell with ferocity. "You go on quick. Back to the pub. And stay there."

So Reggie strode out like a man who had business and left Superintendent Bell smoking

his pipe on the harbour road.

It was two hours later and Reggie was turning over an old gazetteer of Downshire in the smoking-room of the White Hart when Bell's head looked in. "Hallo, French, what about dinner?" it said loudly, and Bell came in and shut the door. "Well, he was on to us all right. He followed you."

"Yes, I know. He had a drink in the bar and asked who we were, Brown," Reggie

 $\mathbf{smiled}$ .

"That's right. Got a nerve, hasn't he? Then he hustled away to a garage and went off on a motor-bike. I've got him ticketed, though. He's been in and out of the town a good deal the last few days. He and another chap, small fellow with one arm. They took a bungalow out Ashurst way a

week ago. Give out they're artists. Name of Vereker. Oh, that ship, by the way. is a Swede. Been in about a week. often get timber boats here. Almost the only ones they do get. There it is. These chaps came here about the same time as a Swedish schooner. And as soon as we're in the place, they're trailing us. It beats me."

"Yes. Yes. Several unknown factors. Quite a lot of factors. That's very stimulating. Come on. There's red mullet for dinner and a little saddle of lamb. They

brag about their Madeira."

After dinner, Mr. Fortune, who loves not walking at any hour but then least of all, was tempted by the curiosity of duty to stroll with his cigar. But in the silent streets of Lythe no footfall followed theirs. They climbed to the little green by the watchtower that once guarded the harbour. the faint light of the rising moon the marsh lay dim and misty, but they could make out the winding of the river. "Look. She's eliminated," said Reggie. A light high in air was moving seaward slowly and they heard the faint heavy beat of a motor engine. The schooner was standing out to sea on the ebb.

Over the marsh, mist gathered in strange shapes, like giant spirits walking on the wind, silvery in the moonlight, dark in the cloud shadows, and changing form as they moved. "Weird place, isn't it?" Bell muttered.

The sound of another motor was borne up to them, but a sharper sound, a motorbicycle driven fast. It drew nearer, it rushed along the harbour road, vanished, stopped. Then they heard the engine start again and at the same high speed it came

"I'm afraid somebody's missed the boat," said Mr. Fortune.

"And if you know what that means!" said Bell with emotion.

"I don't. Very complex problem. going to my bed."

"Sleep on it, eh? Good Lord, I shall dream of it."

In the morning Mr. Fortune (this is most unusual) was up early. He found Bell morosely shaving. "Oh Bell, oh my Bell!" he protested. "This gloom! Hence, loathed melancholy! Let us then be up and doing, for the grave is not the goal."

"I don't know what we're going to do." Bell wiped his face with a certain violence.

Reggie sat on the bed and swung his legs. "I was going to look for Landomeres in their ancestral haunts. And you could look after me. On a push-bike. Nice healthy exercise. In case the firm of Vereker might be interested."

So alone in the car Reggie drove to the manor-house of Ashurst. A large board in its park informed him that it was for sale by order of executors. He conferred with an old lodge-keeper. The place had been owned by the Fenley family for a century. Of course it was the Landomeres' once, like everything round about-lands, churches, everything. Why, Ashurst churchyard was fair full of Landomeres. But they'd been gone this long time.

The hireling car came back to the road and looked for Bell and his push-bike, but in Reggie laid a course for Ashurst church, which proved hard to find. Ashurst village consisted of a post office where lanes diverged to farms and scattered cottages. The church was reported a mile and a bit away by road, but there was a path through the woods. Reggie trudged on the footpath

way. Up and down among hornbeam and hazel he came out to the bare slope by which the woodland falls to the marsh and saw a little shingled spire. Ashurst church stands on the edge of the high ground alone but for a vicarage of brown stone. Reggie climbed a steep path and by a cuckoo gate between ancient yews came into the churchyard. It was large and stretched to the very verge of its hill, which fell away in a little sandstone cliff to the marsh. But in spite of the old lady at the lodge it was by no means full. A big eighteenth-century grave took his eye: a cubical structure of stone inside a railing, plainly a family vault. He came to it and on the crumbling top made out the Landomere lion fish and the vestiges of a Latin inscription: something about Gerardus eques "Yes. Our Gerard's in the et domina. mortuary," he murmured. "And Sir Gerard and his lady are down there." stood contemplating that ancient stone and the railing and the steps within it which led to an iron door into the earth. He turned away and wandered back over the close-shorn turf to the neat path. Somebody was coming.

"Good day." A little white-haired, rosycheeked parson smiled and made him an old-"Did you wish to see the world bow. church? I shall be delighted to show it you. We are so out of the world, I'm afraid many good people miss it. Quite a humble place, of course, but I do venture to think ra-ther

beautiful, ra-ther beautiful." He unlocked the door.

The church was an austere piece of Early English. But the little parson had much more to say about it: of squint and rood-loft, aumbry, east window, tower arch he chirruped. So gratifying to talk to someone who understood: so rarely found them coming to Ashurst. Of course they were quite out of the world. Mr. Fortune explained that he was just taking a run round the old country. From Canada. Been having a look at the old house that was on the market. They told him the church was worth seeing.

"Really! Really!" the vicar beamed. "Shall I be having you as one of my

parishioners, sir ?"

Reggie shook his head. "I didn't take to the place myself. Not what I call old. I heard it was some real old family castle. What was the name? Land-us-here—something like that?"

The little parson looked bewildered. "Miss Fenley was the owner, sir. Ah, I expect the name you heard was Landomere. They have been dead and gone for centuries. Dear me, yes. The glory of this world passes away." He shepherded Reggie to the door. While he was locking it, Reggie strolled across the turf to some of the older graves. "Our little God's acre, sir. A sweet, quiet place."

"Yes, yes." Reggie turned and surveyed it. "Thanks very much. It's been most interesting. I was wonderin' which is my best way? I left my car up on the road." He looked at the pebbly track which curved past the vicarage and down under the cliff

to run across the marsh.

"Oh, you were quite right, sir. That's only a farm track. There is a charming footpath through the woods. I do hope you found it?"

"Yes. Charming. Yes. Many thanks.

I'll take that again."

The little parson said good day and left him in the churchyard. He wandered among the graves, but he did not go back to the family vault of the Landomeres. Once, twice and again he found the name of Akers.

He took the woodland path at speed. But the post office of Ashurst knew nobody called

Akers.

Bell and the bicycle had not appeared to his chauffeur. The hireling car was driven hard back to Lythe and Mr. Fortune, pale and dreamy, filled the void of a lunchless day with many tea-cakes. But they brought no peace to his troubled mind. He watched the clock, he watched the street. Bell," he murmured, and sought the post office and the telephone. "Fortune speaking. Have you got that valet yet? No? Don't tell me Logan's still close on him. I'm tired. I want some Lord High Muckamuck of the telephones to be at Lythe to-morrow bright and early and do what I tell him. Anything else? Yes, thanks. I want three or four good men to report to Mr. French at the White Hart here to-morrow. Better come in a fast car. Who's Mr. French? Me. What's doing? I don't know. But we're close on it. No, Lomas dear, not like Logan. Good-bye. Pleasant dreams.'

He hurried back to the inn and there was relieved by the sight of Superintendent Bell swallowing tea in large gulps. "Well, well," said Reggie, and sank into a chair. "And are we still alive and see each other's face? What have you been doing, Mr. Brown? I was afraid further complications had set in."

Bell looked round the lounge. Bell edged his chair nearer. "You were all right, sir. I've had a line on you all day. Saw you in the churchyard. You didn't see me. Found anything?"

"Yes. Yes. A Landomere family vault.

Also some Akers graves."

"Akers! He was from down here too? Good Lord! The more you get, the more it beats you. What is there about that church, Mr. Fortune?"

"I didn't see anything myself," said Mr. Fortune.

"All day long, one of the Verekers has been hanging round. When I followed you past the Verekers' bungalow one of 'em was coming out, but he didn't so much as look after your car. He went into the woods. When I got near him, he was away to one side of the church, sitting down. After a while he moves on a bit, but always keeping close to the church and that house there. The other one, a little chap, with one arm, came along and relieved him just a while ago. They're up to something there."

"Yes. Yes. That is indicated," Reggie murmured. "I'm tired, Bell. Quite tired." He lay back in his chair gazing with large melancholy eyes at the wall. "One large long bath," he murmured. "A light but nourishing dinner. And so to bed." He rose wearily. He vanished, he appeared again only to dine, he was between the sheets

before nine.



But Superintendent Bell, drawing up his blind in the morning, saw the hireling car at the door and came down to find him already in the marmalade stage of breakfast.

"Going off somewhere, sir?"

"Only round to the post office," said

Reggie, and went.

A man stood yawning behind the clerks at the counter, surveyed him for a moment and came round to him. Did he want to see anybody? Reggie was expecting a gentleman from London about the telephone service. He was taken upstairs to a meagre "I thought I knew you, Mr. Fortune. My name's Brock. Remember the Sinclair case? Now my instructions are to do anything I can for you. What's the business?"

"Well, I shouldn't wonder if you have one or two people coming in to complain their telephones are out of order. Useful things, wire nippers. Of course you don't know anything about that." Mr. Brock winked. "Tell your people to be very civil and don't

do anything just yet."

"I say, you didn't bring me down from London for that," Mr. Brock grinned. "That's the routine."

"No. I expect some of these people will want to make trunk calls. Take the numbers they ask for and then have 'em told the trunk wires are out of action. See? I want the numbers, but they mustn't get through to-day."

"That's all right. It means nobody will be able to get a trunk call through Lythe till you say the word. But that don't matter much. I dare say they don't have

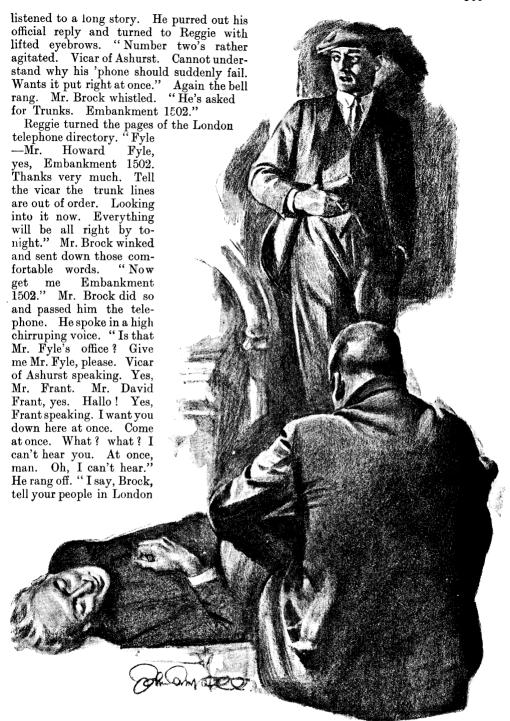
three a day."

Reggie gave him a cigar and they settled down to talk motor-cars.

It was some time before a telephone bell disturbed them. Mr. Brock answered it and turned to Reggie. "Here we are. Man complaining his 'phone's out of order. Name of Vereker." He sent down a soothing official answer. "They say he seems quite satisfied. Didn't ask for any other number. You haven't got much out of that, Mr. Fortune."

Reggie Fortune smiled a slow, benign smile. "You never know, you know," he murmured. "We have to try everything." And he began to talk cricket.

The telephone rang again. Mr. Brock



"'Three of you, eh?'" said Bell.
"'All here, officer,' the unshaven face of the smoker grinned. 'That's nice, isn't it?'"

no other trunk call must get through to Embankment 1502 to-day. Good-bye."

He came back to the inn and found Superintendent Bell surrounded by four large men.

He took them upstairs to his room. With a map of large scale upon the bed he demonstrated. . . .

The haze of evening stole over the marsh. Below Ashurst church Reggie and Bell lav in the shade of a clump of alder. The last edge of the sun passed into a grey bank of darkening cloud and the horizon closed upon them, the world was smaller and dim.

They heard a car and Bell rose and walked away. A closed car came into sight, swung round to the vicarage and stopped. One man got out quickly and found the door open to receive him. There was a murmur of voices and the door slammed behind him. In the silence Reggie stood up and came to the cliff below the church. He thrust into the bushes at its base; waited a moment listening and strolled on.

Bell was knocking at the vicarage door. After a while a man-servant opened it. "I'm a police officer. Superintendent Bell." He put in his foot. "I want to see Mr. Howard

Fyle."

"I don't know the gentleman, sir."

"The gentleman that's just come."

"I couldn't say, I'm sure. I'll ask the vicar. Will you come in, sir?"

Bell was shut into a little room which looked out upon the woods. . . . He heard faint movements and ran back to the hall Mr. Fyle's car was still there. saw two men vanish out of the gate into the dusk. He chuckled and blew his whistle and shouted, "Two. Two on foot," and ran after them and bumped into Mr. Fortune.

"Hallo, sir. Both of them bolted. Left the car too. That's a queer start. their heads, ch? Did you see 'em?"

"Yes. They went into the churchyard." Bell hurried on. He met a small man, gripped at him and gasped, for his hand closed on an armless side. "What the devil are you doing here?"

"And the same to you," he was answered

crisply.

"I've had this man under observation all the time, sir," one of the detectives loomed up. "He's been watching the house."
"Now, my man, what's your little game?

We're police officers. Out with it.'

"You're after the vicar? Praise God. I'm with you. My name's Vereker. Major Vereker. Come on. He cut off into the churchvard."

"Run away, Bell," said Reggie. "I want to talk to Major Vereker. My name's Fortune, sir."

Bell ran on with his satellite. Reggie took Major Vereker's one arm and followed slowly.

" I say, Mr. Fortune, this parson is pretty hot stuff. We'd better be after him, too.

"Don't worry. There's men all round

"He's for it, is he? I mean to say, you've got a line on him?"

"Yes, I think so. There's only one thing that's always beat me, and that's where Major Vereker comes in."

"Well, you see, I knew Landomere."

"Yes. Yes. I thought you might." Reggie sat down on the railing of the Landomere grave. "But how much did you know?",

"I'd known him off and on since he was a My people knew his father in Jersey. Gerry wasn't much of a chap, poor devil. Weak, you know. This darned parson was his tutor. Gerry's father got the people who had the old Landomere estate to give the parson this living. Had to stop his mouth about some scandal with poor old Gerry. Well, Gerry had a good streak in him. He did have some decent pals once. A few weeks ago he wrote to me there was dirty work doing about a woman. It was the daughter of a pal of his who was killed. in the war. She had a little bit of a past: she'd just got married and he said he heard some fellows were going to blackmail her. Well, I only knew one fellow besides Gerry who was wise to her affair, and that was an old servant of his, George Akers. It looked to me like a plant of Gerry's to draw a little safe blackmail himself. I warned her and nothing happened. Then I read about the inquest on George Akers and on top of that came Gerry cutting his throat. That made me think. I had nothing to go on, but I always used to fancy Gerry might have been a decent chap without Parson Frant. Frant was the only chap likely to have a pull on Gerry. I thought it was up to me to see if I could place Parson Frant in it. So I came down here with my brother to have a look at him. And I've got this, Mr. Fortune. Frant's doing some queer business. trailed him to an inn in the marshes and the chaps he met there were off a foreign timber ship in Lythe harbour. We watched her---''

"You watched me, didn't you?" Reggie smiled. "I'm afraid I rather confused you, major. You confused me."

Sorry, sir. Yes, my brother followed you. Thought you might be in the game. But what is the game? What's a country parson-

Bell lumbered up. "They're hiding somewhere, sir. How about trying the church?"

Mr. Fortune rose. "No, I don't think they're in the church," he said. "Come on." He stepped over the railing and went down the steps to the door of the vault. "Got your torches?"

"In there?" Bell flashed a light on the

iron door.

"That's where they went."

"Good Lord, why didn't you tell me?" "Well, I thought they'd better have time to think things over."

"But there may be a way out, sir."

"Oh yes. Yes. There is. Under the But they won't use it. I wedged

the other door."

"My God!" Bell muttered, and breathed "This one," he felt it, "this one's locked, eh? Come on, Porter." He turned his light on the door, he took out a pistol. Porter began to force the lock: it yielded, the door slid back and the torch-light revealed wide spaces of gloom: turned this way and that, fell upon rough-hewn stone, coffins thrust into a corner, set one upon another and in the midst metal chests which bore some bottles and scraps of food. no one was to be seen. "Come on, out of it," Bell shouted, and no one answered.

He stooped and strode in. "You stand by the door, Porter." The beam of his torch searched the vault again and found a passage leading out of it on the far side. Into that he marched, throwing the light before him. "What the devil!" The light came upon a fallen motor-bicycle. Beyond it were men: a man sitting on the ground bowed together, a man standing smoking a cigarette, a man lying between them, his white hair dabbled with blood.

"Three of you, eh?" said Bell.

"All here, officer," the unshaven face of the smoker grinned. "That's nice, isn't it ? "

"Mr. Landomere's valet, I presume,"

said Reggie.

"You know a lot, don't you? And Mr. Howard Fyle. And the Reverend blooming

Frant. All present and correct."

"You put up your hands," said Bell. "Mr. Fortune, will you have a look at the parson? Porter! Call the other men and come along."

Reggie bent over the little parson.

"Yes, you look at him," the valet growled. "I've done him proud." . . .

Reggie stood up. "He's almost gone," he said quietly. "He can't live, Bell."

"Take my oath he can't." The valet

laughed and kicked at the body.

"You've done enough." Bell dragged

him away. "This is murder."

"I don't think. Not half. And what about them Mr. blooming Frant put away, George Akers and Landomere? What about me, keeping me down here in the grave to have me trapped like a blooming rat at last? Well, I smashed him like a rat. I've got back on him, anyway."

"Come on with you." Bell hustled him off. "Take that man, Porter." He pointed to the wretched Mr. Fyle. "Send the others along for the parson."

Into the room of the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department Mr. Fortune came to find Lomas with Superintendent Bell. "Well, well! How doth the little busy bee! This industry is very gratifying. Any little thing you haven't got that you want?"

"It was cocaine in those boxes in the

vault, Mr. Fortune," said Bell.

"Oh yes. Yes. From the timber ships. Not a nice man, the late Mr. Frant. Recreations, drug-running and blackmail. Do you find anything of interest in the papers of Mr. Frant and Mr. Fyle?"

"They didn't put much on paper," Lomas shrugged, "but it was big business.

always said that, you know."
"Yes, Lomas," said Mr. Fortune meekly. "And a little country parson at the head of it!" said Bell.

"One of the world's great brains," Mr.

Fortune smiled.

"I always thought there was a good brain behind all this business," Lomas announced. "We're going to clear up a lot of mess, Reginald. Fyle's been talking. That business in the vault seems to have broken him right open."

"Fancy!"

"Akers was an old servant of Landomere's: faithful family retainer. Frant had been using them both for years. They shied at blackmailing this girl. Frant thought they meant to give him away. He had Akers murdered to stop his mouth and frighten Landomere. Landomere was badly rattled, but the way it took him was to swear he'd have no more to do with Frant. So Frant and the valet put him away. When Logan got going, the valet bolted down to the vicarage. Frant tried to ship him off"Yes. Yes. We saw that. They just missed the boat. A bit of luck. The only bit of luck. The rest was research work."

"Mr. Fortune," said Bell, "when did you

feel sure Frant used that vault?".

"The first time I saw it. There was a smell of tobacco coming up. And Mr. Frant was so interested in me."

Bell gazed at him. "Would you mind telling me—after you wedged that other door —when you kept talking—did you fancy they'd quarrel down there in the grave?"

"Yes. Yes." Reggie looked at him with large, solemn eyes. "I thought they might have trouble. I hoped they would. Yes. One of my neater cases, Bell."

#### NEXT MONTH-"ZODIACS."

"What are Zodiacs?" asks Mr. Fortune. "They sound horrid."

The answer did not prove to be simple, but, as usual, Mr. Fortune made a pretty neat case, for which others took the credit. A story not to be missed.

#### THE SECRET.

HAVE found a secret concerning you, my dear,
But oh! you need not frown, lad, and oh! you need not fear!
Soft my heart is singing it, but you shall never hear.

Once I bruised my heart, lad, digging me a grave Where to lay my young love, the love you could not slave; But I never cried at all—(you said I wasn't brave).

Oh, I plucked my dear dreams, and wove a wreath to spread; I made a little sad song, because my love was dead; Then I left a little prayer, to bless the foot and head.

Oh, I kept a watch there with Grief for many a day, Then I stooped and kissed her, and said "I will not stay—I will go a-journeying another, kinder way!"

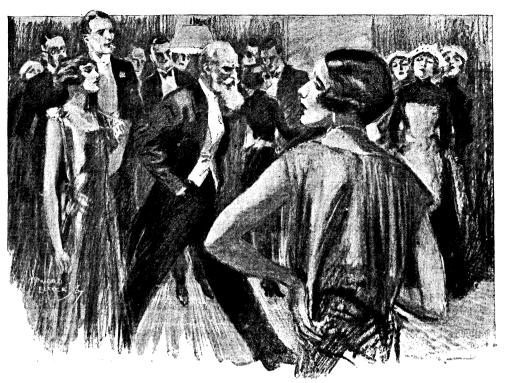
So I left my grave, lad, and found me other things. In my heart I keep now a magic bird that sings; Joy came by, and laughed with me, and cheered my journeyings.

Now I tread the old way, with laughter in my ears, I've found again the dead dreams I wove in other years, And I have found a Shining One I met with happy tears.

Tho' you should meet and pass me, with shadow in your eyes, I would not grieve nor flinch now, nor yex my soul with whys, Since I have found a living Truth more fair than all the lies!

But I can keep a secret concerning you, my dear,
And so you need not frown, lad, and so you need not fear
—Soft my heart is singing it, but no one else shall hear!

ANNE PAGE.



"It was indeed 'the Duke' who contributed movement to this strangely assorted gathering."

# THE DATCHLEY • INHERITANCE •

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE UNEXPECTED VISITOR

### By STEPHEN McKENNA

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

"NOTWITHSTANDING anything to the contrary contained in my Will I GIVE DEVISE AND BEQUEATH all my real and personal estate to such grandson of mine as shall be the first to marry within twelve calendar months from the date of this Codicil and shall within that period legally adopt the surname of Datchley and shall within six months of his marriage give an Undertaking to reside at Datchley Castle for not less than six calendar months in each year after my death. If there shall be no such grandson then the provisions of my Will shall take effect."

Extract from the codicil to the last will and testament of John Datchley.

HEN sympathetic friends, contrasting the weeks of her married life with the years of her grasswidowhood, asked Gill Arkwright whether she would now recognize her husband again, she used to reply at first that, even if he shaved his big, fair moustache and dyed his hair, she could identify him at a hundred

yards' distance by his square-bridged nose.
"It is just like what the great Duke

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of Wellington's used to be," she would

"It was just like the great Duke of Wellington's," she came to recall later.

And no one knew whether she believed Miles to be dead or was wiping him from her memory until he should demonstrate disastrously that he was alive. Whatever had happened to him, it seemed that nothing even in his life of plundering and betrayal became him quite so ill as his leaving of it. Under different names in different parts of the world "Miles Arkwright" had abandoned one woman after another, but the curious had hitherto been able to track his foot-prints from field to stricken field. Now, for one, three, six years he had vanished; and, while it was no doubt possible for a man to disappear even in such conditions of passports and police supervision as the war had left behind, it was easier for almost any one than for a man distinguished by the boldness of feature and glossiness of surface that are so often found in sergeant-majors of the more illustrious regiments. Gill's vanished husband, had he stooped to work for a living, might have earned one as a Bateman model.

At one period of his career "Miles Arkwright" had indeed risen to the rank of sergeant-major, after falling from that of major, enlisting under a false name and eluding with equal success the superior officer with whose wife he had eloped in Egypt and the brother-officers whose messfunds he had unaccountably mislaid in When he married Gill and under-India. took the administration of her small fortune, he had climbed the ladder of rehabilitation as far as a territorial captaincy; and he was said to be contemplating a regular commission when the war ended and he demobilized himself with a woman whose fortune was greater than Gill's.

Her sympathetic friends at once urged the forsaken wife to apply for a divorce; and, when Gill reminded them that she must catch her hare before she could cook him, they advised her to employ the best detectives and to put herself into the hands of the best solicitors. A man, they assured her, could not disappear indefinitely; and, when at length she recalled that Miles had disappeared for nearly seven years, they insisted that he must have found his way to a dishonoured grave and pressed her to obtain leave to presume his death.

What none of them remembered to do was to provide her with the means of

employing the best detectives or of instructing the best solicitors. When she found herself not only deserted but penniless, Gill had starved for a while in the ranks of the expensively reared women who wished to open hat-shops without capital or to become secretaries without knowledge of shorthand; she had wasted her last borrowed pounds on advertising and had worn shabby her last handed-on clothes in keeping fruitless appointments before she lighted on the employment that had at least kept her alive for seven years. By day she now gave lessons in dancing-her one accomplishment—; by night she attended at the Laguna Club as a professional partner. Her dinner was supplied her in part-payment of her services; her dresses were given her as an advertisement; and it was her business to sit from nine till twelve while a watchful manager informed unattached young men that, if they would care to dance, he would gladly introduce them to "Miss" Arkwright. By working five days a week she kept herself housed, clothed and fed, but she was not in a position to feed or house or clothe a single detective or solicitor.

"If I can't get freedom, at least I've got security," Gill was wont to tell her friends.

In seven years she had not forgotten her empty search for employment; and, when old men trampled on her feet or young men on her feelings, she achieved resignation by calling to mind the hopeless hordes of women made widows by the war and of girls thrown out of work by the peace, who—for all she knew—were still writing and answering deceptive advertisements.

"But where's it going to end?" asked the friends.

To this Gill could only reply with a shrug that was intended to be light-hearted.

"If I could save a little money," she reflected privately, "the thing would end itself. I'd get free of Miles and marry again. If some one would only lend me the money . . . I'd ask John, but he's almost as poor as I am."

It was to John Gauntlett, who had served with Miles in Gallipoli, that Gill owed her introduction to the Laguna Club. It was to him that she always turned for advice. When she had an evening off duty at week-ends, it was John—now a clerk in the City—who called for her in Shepherd's Bush and took her by omnibus to Soho. Founded on a similarity of undeserved misfortune, their friendship was cemented

by a common hopelessness. Through no imaginable fault of her own, Gill had been deserted by a blackguard from whom she could not escape; and, with no more justice, John was being punished for his mother's runaway marriage of forty years ago by a grandfather who resembled his own resentment in refusing to die.

Since it is unnatural for hopelessness to flourish in those who have not yet passed their five-and-thirtieth birthday, the friendship was made radiant by the day-dreams to which it gave birth. In his heart of hearts, though Gill could not drive down a London street without scrutinizing anxiously the faces of the passers-by, John knew that he would one day read of "Miles Arkwright's " death; and, when she pretended to be most resigned, Gill was convinced that John, though he talked of his city employment as a "life sentence", would drive to her door one day in a gleaming car to say that old Mr. Datchley had at last relented, that they were rich and could be married at once. . . .

One Saturday night, as she waited to be taken out to their weekly dinner in Soho, Gill allowed her day-dreams to follow their accustomed course. She had reached the moment of John's imaginary arrival when a gleaming car slowed down at the door of Charlesworth Mansions. A tall figure in a white waistcoat and silk hat jumped out. It was John! Incredibly but quite unmistakably, it was John! While she waited with held breath to see if he would look up, as ever, to her distant window, he whipped his hand from behind his back and waved a cascading spray of white and purple orchids at her.

#### II.

"No, you say first where we're to dine," John insisted, controlling his excitement with an effort. "I'll explain later. It's not to be anywhere cheap or nasty, that's all. We're through with cheapness and nastiness, Gill, for ever. Some place where we can dance, if that isn't too much of a busman's holiday for you."

"But, John . . .!" She looked from the orchids to a box which—he told her—contained gloves and from the box to a pearl pendant. Some one must have been leaving John a fortune! "The Gloucester! Yes, I insist," she exclaimed, as he wrinkled his nose. "Even if it is crowded and noisy. Then I can have a real busman's holiday, watching the other

pro's . . . What's happened? You seem to have been striking it rich!"

"If you call five thousand 'striking it rich'," he laughed, "my grandfather gave me that just before he died. The car's only hired, by the way. I should be striking it rich in every sense of the word, though, if you'd say you would marry me. Will you?"

He asked her with a smile, as though he were asking her to dine; and she answered promptly and happily, with the smile she gave to anything he asked:

"If you can prove that my husband's dead or if you can shew me how to divorce him."

"I'll devote my five thousand, or what remains of it, to tracking him down, if necessary; but I don't believe it is. We must go to a lawyer about this; but I've an idea that, if you've not seen or heard of your husband for seven years, you're free to marry again. Well, it's more than seven years since you heard anything of Miles, isn't it? I suggest that we get married with the least possible delay."

Though he seemed to be in earnest, Gill was obliged to keep a way of retreat open with a jest:

"See that he's a good lawyer. Nothing cheap and nasty. I don't want to be run in for bigamy, John."

"Oh, we won't take any risks," he promised, "but there isn't a moment to lose. My grandfather left the whole of his estate—it's over four million—to the one of us who married first. We have less than twelve months to do it in; and there's a field of nine. At this moment one of the others may be getting in before me! Four millions! No more Laguna Club for you, my dear; no more Gracechurch Street for me!"

Gill gazed ahead of her without attempting to speak. If she had heard the figure rightly, she could not yet comprehend it. In her day-dreams and prayers she had never looked beyond the sum, still undefined, which would bring her, for the first time since she married, impregnable security. For seven years she had been haunted by the fear that "Miles" would return to claim her. At this moment, even with John by her side, she looked, from force of habit, into the face of any tall, fair man that passed.

"If the solicitor puts up the 'All Right' signal," John was asking, "are you prepared to marry me at once? With my five

thousand, we shan't starve. whatever

happens . . ."

"My dear, so long as I'm with you . . . ," Gill whispered with a tremor that betraved the suffering and the yearning of seven "hopeless" and "resigned" years.

"We oughtn't to waste time, though. When I first heard about the will—some weeks ago now-I said I wouldn't touch the money with a pole. It had brought nothing but unhappiness to my grandfather: it had been a blight on my mother's life; and I had a superstitious feeling that, if I raised a finger to get it, the curse would fall on me. I wouldn't refuse the five thousand: that would enable us to marry. I said, though, that any one who wanted the rest could have it . . ."

Gill's dark brows met in a frown of

perplexity.

I'm not sure that I understand . . ."

"The reason why we should have a shot for it now? Well, some of the others have tried and failed. No one can say we've been in a hurry. If you'd rather we left the thing alone, though, we'll never give it another thought. I confess I feel it's rather like tempting providence. If you feel there's a curse on something . . ."

"But it would be tempting providence to let it go!" Gill cried. "You say the

others have failed . . ."

"And I sometimes think we shall all of us fail. That I don't mind, but I couldn't stand losing what I've got. Do you care about taking the risk?

"I don't see that it is a risk," Gill

answered.

Only once before, when he had drawn the second prize in a sweepstake, had John been in funds to make the Gloucester the scene of their weekly dinner; and now, as they walked side by side to the door of the restaurant, Gill felt that it must have been a different woman who had worn her clothes and answered to her name on that occasion. In a sense, they were country cousins then, a little awed by the magnificence of place and people, a little daunted by the majestic humility of the manager and by the humble majesty of the head waiter, a little disconcerted by the stares of their neighbours, a little mortified by the suspicion that they had no business to be there, among fortune's most unmistakable favourites.

Now they came as of right. John was asking for a private dining-room; and, in giving her vote for the public restaurant, Gill was indulging a frantic desire to be seen with him in their triumph. Four millions, had he said?

"It will be easier to talk if we're by ourselves," he urged. "However... What about that table in the corner?"

The head waiter, hovering obsequiously

near by, hunched his shoulders.

"It is reserved, sir. His Grace the Duke of Ronda . . . If you would care for the next one? In the window?"

"So long as we aren't on top of the

band . . . ," John answered.

While he ordered the dinner, Gill looked round the gaudily magnificent restaurant. Though it was still half-empty, one table had already been taken by a party of four, professionals like herself, one of them a man who had danced formerly at the Laguna Club. At another, as John observed with delight, one of his directors was entertaining friends.

"That's over, anyway," she whispered, on behalf of them both.

Then her attention was caught by the head waiter, who was ushering a man and woman down the deep-carpeted gangway to their corner. This, she presumed, must be the Duke of Ronda; and she looked up, wondering what a Spanish duke was like, Then she looked away, recognizing quite calmly that this was what she had been expecting for seven years, never so strongly as when she was driving by John's side to the Gloucester and examining the passers-by with redoubled, final care. The nose certainly bore a striking resemblance to Wellington's! Seeing it, one almost ceased to look at anything else; and some moments passed before Gill noticed that its owner was now wearing a square white beard.

For a moment she was tortured by a sense of mathematical injustice. When there were three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, when she had looked for Miles unavailingly for seven years, when there were a hundred other places where she might have gone with impunity, why on this night of all nights should this man of all London's millions come to this restaurant of all restaurants? And why should she light almost haphazard on this restaurant for this night? To the superstitious it would seem that her choice had not been her own, but was John superstitious enough to think that? Would he not rather say: "I jibbed at the Gloucester, but you would go there; I wanted a private room, but you

wouldn't have it"? If this encounter

proved as untoward as it threatened to be, would not John think, even if he never said: " I wanted, as I told you, to leave the infernal money alone. You were so greedy to get it . . . If I could get you, I should be getting what I wanted; and I wouldn't risk that for any inducement on earth or in the waters under the earth. You, of course . . . "?

Gill gripped the sides of her chair and looked up almost as though she expected him to strike her in the face; but John was contentedly discussing the menu with the waiter. She thus had time to see that "the duke's" companion was a girl of about five-and-twenty in a Spanish shawl, with tortoise-shell ear-rings and comb. Miles had probably, Gill decided, made himself a Spaniard to secure her, as he had assuredly made himself a duke to secure her money!

"Just my luck . . . ," she sighed.

And yet, as he was alive, he could be identified, cited and divorced. This, John must agree, was better than applying for leave to presume his death and then spending the rest of their lives being molested by him! >

"Well, that will do for a start," John was saying to the waiter. "Will you bring the wine-list?" Then he turned to Gill with a smile that froze to alarmed surprise:

"What's the matter, darling?"

"Nothing!" she assured him. "I'm only not quite sure that I'm awake. What you were saying in the car . . . This place, the people . . . When you get a chance, will you look at the couple behind you? Tell me if the man reminds you of any one."

#### III.

"So far as I'm aware," said John a few minutes later, "I've never set eyes on him before."

Gill looked past him to the neighbouring table, where a conversation, in a language that she could not distinguish, was being maintained with an animation which Anglo-Saxons never achieve and seldom attempt.

"If you can imagine him without a beard, twenty years younger?" she asked.

John made a second cautious inspection and shook his head.

"You might say that the nose is reminis-

cent of Miles . . . ," he began.
"That is Miles," Gill interrupted in a

"My dear! This is a different gener-

ation!" "That's M." Gill replied stubbornly. "I ought to know my own husband, even after seven years."

John despatched a waiter to bring cocktails: "Double size, double-quick time."

"You wouldn't imagine it for a moment," he told Gill, "if you weren't so afraid of meeting him. Sweetheart, he and I were together in Gallipoli and France. Same trench, same billets. I've seen him stripped and with three days' beard . . . Anyway, I can settle it once and for all." Jumping up, he walked to the table in the corner and bowed to the white-bearded man and his companion. "I beg your pardon, sir," Gill heard him beginning. "Will you and this lady feel it if I get one of the waiters to open this window? It's so very hot to-night. The lady dining with me . . ."

He paused as the voluble stranger interrupted his own conversation, looked up with an uncomprehending stare and finally shrugged his shoulders. The head waiter bustled up to know whether anything was amiss and translated John's question into Spanish. There was a second shrug, an interrogatory glance and a rapid, unintelligible reply.

"His Grace says if you find it absolutely necessary . . . ," explained the head waiter. "Perhaps you'll let me give you another table, sir."

"Oh, it's not as important as all that, but the room is appallingly stuffy," said

Then he went back to his place with a smile that seemed to ask whether Gill was satisfied now.

"He's a wonderful actor," was all she would say.

"He would be, if he were the man you think he is. My dear, I was watching him. He looked at me like a village idiot. Didn't understand what I was saying and had certainly never set eyes on me. When the head waiter came to interpret, I stood aside and he stared at you without turning a hair."

"He was always cool," sighed Gill.

John left their conversation in suspense as their waiter arrived with the cocktails. If Gill was at present a little unbalanced by the changes that had overtaken the fortunes since he invited her, in a previous existence, to dine with him in Soho and spend the evening at a picture-theatre, it was natural enough! He had been so much unbalanced himself that he had not invited her until he had made sure there was no mistake in the solicitor's letters; and, when he was at last reassured, he had superstitiously, fatalistically allowed a month to slip away without doing anything. He would be less chagrined to miss the Datchley millions, he told himself, if he made little effort to win them; if destiny meant him to have them, he would have them as surely in three months' time as now. There was

little need of the solicitor's vague hint that there might be something sinister in the belated conversion of their generally remorseless grandfather: John had endured so many disappointments that, so far from counting his chickens before they were hatched, he did not think of them until they had been sold and the proceeds banked. From the first, he had been saying: "If I can get Gill and keep my five thousand, I shall let the other money take care of itself. Theold man shan't have the satisfaction of scoring

off me if I can help it. Remember Æsop's fable of the dog and the piece of meat . . ."

"Feeling better?" he asked, as Gill set

down her glass.

"I'm all right," she answered, forcing a smile. "It was a shock, of course, but in a way I've been expecting it so long . . . I was thanking we should have to modify our plans a little . . ."

"You still believe . . . ?"

"My dear, I know! And I won't commit

bigamy to please even you."

It was prudent, John reflected, to have been fatalistic: if he was destined to miss the Datchley millions, he would miss them with equal certainty now or later. The immediate visit to the solicitor faded from his mind with all the plans for an immediate wedding. Gill, however, remained. Nothing and no one was going to take her from him.

Leaning forward, he laid his hand on hers: "If you're right, if he's alive, in London, we can get hold of him!"



"Her attention was caught by the head waiter, who was ushering a man and woman . . . to their corner. This, she presumed, must be the Duke of Ronda."

"I suppose I should get a divorce," Gill answered, still watching the aquiline face at the next table.

"Not a doubt. And, if he isn't M., we'll 'presume' that M.'s dead and you can marry me at once. My dear, we'll clear the thing up to-night!" He beckoned to the head waiter and complimented him on the dinner. "I wonder," he asked, fingering a note-case, "whether you can spare time to give me a little information about one of your clients? It's the man behind me," he continued, dropping his voice. "Is the lady his wife? Does he come here often?"

"His Grace is staying here, sir," the head waiter answered in a tone calculated to warn the enquirer against profanity.

"Ah! D'you feel sure he's the person

answered the head waiter. "I was only told to give special attention . . . And as my waiters do not speak Spanish . . ."

John exhibited a five-pound note and looked at his watch.



he makes himself out to be?" John enquired boldly. "Did you institute any enquiries?"

"That is a question for the manager,"

I'm not a creditor, I'm not a detective. For entirely private reasons . . ."

John's manner was even more impressive than the sight of the five-pound note.

"I'll do my best, sir," the head waiter promised.

#### IV.

"I SUPPOSE I did right," John murmured. "Anyway, I'm hanged if all the grandees of Spain, rolled into one, are going to spoil our dinner. Drink up that wine, my dear!"

Though he talked boisterously enough, Gill could not help seeing that, for both of them, their sun had gone behind a cloud. "An undertaker's holiday rather than a busman's," John called their party and stupidly tried to make her laugh instead of leaving her alone with her thoughts. It was almost a relief when the head waiter returned at the end of dinner to ask whether John could spare a moment to visit the manager in his office; and Gill, drifting to the door of the ball-room and observing the melancholy quartette of professional partners, found it in her heart to wish herself back in the untroubled security of the Laguna Club.

"What good John thinks he can do . . .,"

she muttered vaguely.

John, meanwhile, was being ushered through unknown passages to a private office.

"You are the gentleman who was asking about . . . another gentleman who was dining to-night?" the manager began with elaborate discretion. "May I enquire the reason of your question? I will say at once that I'm doing everything in my power to answer it."

John, who half expected to be reprimanded for bribing a servant of the hotel, felt that this opening was auspicious.

"He's an older edition of a man I knew in the Army," he answered. "Rather a bad lot, by the way. I couldn't be sure of the identity, but the lady who was dining with me had no-doubt. If she's right, he's not the Duke of Ronda at all."

The manager nodded and stared with knitted brows at a memorandum-block:

"That we have just ascertained from the Spanish Embassy," he confessed uneasily. "And we were given a strong hint not to allow this person long credit or to cash his cheques. I have telephoned to the Passport Office and to Scotland Yard; and I was wondering if you could help me with any information." The manager opened a box of cigars and pushed it across the table. "To be quite candid, I don't understand what this fellow is up to. So far as I can make out, he's not trying to swindle the

hotel. Everything he or his wife orders is paid for promptly . . ."

"That's not his wife," John interposed. The manager tapped his teeth with the end of his pencil and shifted impatiently in his chair. His expression, as he looked round his staid office, seemed to convey that, while the Gloucester was beyond the reach of scandal, he would have liked John to say everything or nothing.

"Not his wife?" he repeated. "The Embassy, which seems to know a good deal more than it was willing to tell me, said definitely that they were married in Barcelona some years ago. This man seems to be a well-known character there," he confided. "An eccentric, you understand, like that fellow who called himself Emperor of the Sahara some years ago, but—apparently—harmless . . ."

"Did the Embassy say anything more?" John asked.

The manager consulted his notes again: "Nothing that one could take hold of. That being so, it seems hardly worth any one's while to charge him with registering

under a false name.'

"If the woman he's with to-night is his wife, he's a bigamist," John answered. "Miles Arkwright, as my man called himself seven years ago, was as English as you are. He was about my age. And his wife is still living."

The manager noted the information with outward impassivity and stood up slowly to indicate that he need not trouble John further. The allegations would be laid before the Scotland Yard authorities; and there the matter must, for the moment,

Walking slowly back to the ball-room, John tried to think how he should describe his interview to Gill. "My man . . . If the woman he's with . . . Miles Arkwright, as my man called himself . . ." It would have been easier if he could determine what he himself believed. In spite of the beard and the white hair; she was ready to swear that this man was her husband. In face of such testimony, given against her own interests, it was hard to make convincing the vague, second-hand opinion that he was an eccentric from Barcelona.

"Well, I don't know what to say," John sighed, as he led Gill away from the corner where "the duke" was conversing in vehement unconsciousness of the interest he had aroused. "Are you really certain, my dear?"

"I wouldn't risk marrying you till I'd divorced him," Gill answered.

"Would you be satisfied if Scotland Yard definitely stated that he was some one else?"

"Scotland Yard can't be expected to know my husband as well as I do. And Scotland Yard can't keep him from becoming very troublesome if he hears I've married a millionaire."

"He won't blackmail you," John assured her, as they began to dance. "The position is too delicate. I've reason to think that he's been committing a little bigamy on his

own account, Gill . . ."

He stopped as she pulled up short, swaying half out of his arms and nearly bringing him down. Her head was flung back; and she was staring up as though he were the offender. The long years of desertion, it seemed, the longer months of ill-treatment before that, even the unbelievable escape that was being offered her, were all forgotten in an agony of resentment that this man had married again while she was tied to him and that, for all she knew, he had used her money to bait the trap for her successor.

John gripped her fingers and led her

to a chair remote from the door.

"Careful, my dear!" he whispered. "It's only hearsay."

"I can very soon make certain!" Gill answered with flashing eyes.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going up to him! He won't try his Spanish on me! I shall address him by name..."

"Gill darling, he'll beat you all the way at a game of that kind! There'll only be

a row . . ."

"I don't care what happens when I've shewn him up! Let go my hand, please, John!"

"But, Gill, before it's too late . . . It's too late already! Thank Heaven for that!

They've gone!"

The band was beginning to play again; and, as the clustered couples by the door moved into the ball-room, a pair of empty chairs were revealed in the place where "the duke" and his "duchess" had been drinking their coffee a moment before. Though they had escaped her for the moment, however, Gill's white cheeks and burning eyes indicated that she had not abandoned the chase.

"What are you going to do?" John

asked in agony.

"I'm going to find the manager."

"He's here, trying to catch my eye. . . . . Yes?"

The manager came forward with a low bow and an uneasy smile. Might he trouble John for a moment more? It was in connection with the matter which they had been discussing after dinner. A question had arisen. If madame would excuse them for two minutes . . .

"I'm coming too," said Gill.

"I have no right to trouble you . . .," began the manager.

"But I've a right to be present," Gill interrupted. "The man's my husband."

#### V.

The manager's office presented a strange scene of blended repose and action. By the open doorway stood a man that John and Gill had not seen before: a burly but deferential man of middle height, with the oiled hair and scarlet cheeks of a butcherboy promoted to be manager of a small branch. Beside him and yielding precedence, the head waiter stood watchful and motionless, ready at any time to support the man he was flanking or to translate an account of the proceedings for "the duchess", or—if no one else would undertake the job—to assert himself against "the duke".

· It was indeed "the duke" who contributed movement to this strangely assorted gathering. He was striding up and down the room, pouring forth indignation in a tongue which John took for Spanish, though the head waiter had difficulty in following it, and projecting questions of which the head waiter answered a bare one in seven.

"I want you to identify this man," whispered the manager, drawing John into a corner.

Between the reposeful and the active stood a line of ten or eleven men in dayclothes and of women in black dresses and white aprons.

"I can identify him," Gill volunteered, as John hesitated. "When I first met him nine years ago, he called himself Miles Arkwright. I can't tell you whether that was his true name, but you'll find that in the register of Saint Luke's, Fir Grove, on the third of January, 1918. Miles Arkwright," she repeated distinctly, as the protesting figure passed and re-passed, now seeking sympathy from his "duchess", now baring his teeth at the head waiter, but paying no heed to his neighbours or their conversation.

The man whom John likened to a pro-

moted butcher-boy was making rapid notes.

"Do I understand that you were present on that occasion?" he asked Gill.

"We were married there."

"Oh? We have no record of that at the Yard. May I ask when your marriage came to an end?"

"It hasn't. He's left me, but there's been no divorce."

The official from Scotland Yard whistled

softly to himself:

"You're prepared to swear to his identity? Better not say anything unless you're sure. He's got this idea into his head—the duke business—and we've been warned about him, but so long as he doesn't get up to mischief we see no reason to do anything. Of course, if you're going to charge him . . ."

"I certainly shall if that woman's his

wife."

ing monkeys and was only concerned to preserve her dignity.

"D'you feel like dancing?" John asked.
Gill shrugged her shoulders and dropped into a chair.

"I want to think. Now that I've sworn to him, there's no question of my 'presuming' his death, is there? And, unless I can establish his identity, I can't divorce him. You'd have thought that in all London . . . If it had been any other night!"

"A pity you chose this place!" said

John incautiously.

"And a pity I wouldn't have that private room?" she demanded, as though he were attacking her. "A pity I lost my temper and tried to shew him up?"

John smiled with a philosophic goodhumour which he strove to make convinc-

ing:

If we were fated to meet him here

### TO THE MAN WHO PLANTED CHERRY TREES.

As softly as their petals float
When carried by an April breeze,
As softly as a footfall's note
Sinks in an orchard's drift of these,
As sweetly as the Spring's delight
Brings to the waking flow'rs their ease,
May he too sleep, at fall of night,
Who planted flowering cherry trees.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.

 $oldsymbol{a}$ 

"Until this moment we had no reason to doubt it . . . We shall enquire, of course. Meanwhile, I shall be glad if you'll give me your name and address; then I needn't detain you any more at present. Charlesworth Mansions, Shepherd's Bush? And you swear you are this man's lawfully wedded wife? Thank you!"

The scene when Gill left the manager's office had hardly changed from the moment when she entered it. The silent, excited chambermaids were still waiting to give their testimony; the men in day-clothes—were they detectives or hotel-clerks or subordinates from the Spanish Embassy?—were still standing in rank before the door; and the "Duke of Ronda" was still striding up and down, protesting and gesticulating, while the "duchess" fanned herself and looked tranquilly about her as though she

had strayed by mistake into a cage of chatter-

to-night, it's no use crying out against fate. It would have been fun if we could have had a dip for my grandfather's money; but, as that's impossible now, there's no point in thinking about it . . ."

"I honestly don't feel it was my fault,"

sighed Gill.

"It wouldn't make any difference if it were! I still have my legacy almost untouched. That will pay for your divorce, when the time comes, and start us in a decent little house with our own furniture. I believe things will look up in the City when all these strikes are over . . . And I'm always told that two people can live as cheaply as one . . ."

Gill laughed in spite of herself at this desperate effort to comfort her and to assure himself that her husband's unexpected appearance had not set them apart for ever. At short intervals for seven years they had

discussed whether John was making enough to support a wife; they had agreed that he was not. Doubtless, if she continued to work at the Laguna Club, their joint incomes would make it possible for them to live, but they would not make possible a joint life. When John left for the City, Gill would be asleep; when he returned, she would be getting ready to go out. They would see each other at week-ends.

"We'll discuss it later," she promised.
"I just wanted you to understand that we

can't do anything at present."

"And, as I never really expected my grandfather's money, we needn't be disappointed at losing it! Now, I suggest that the first thing for you to do is to consult a good solicitor. I can give you the name of my own. No doubt you'll get a communication of some kind from Scotland Yard . . ."

Though she let him talk uninterrupted, perhaps because she let him talk uninterrupted, John found that he could not go on. At a moment unobserved by either of them at the time, Gill had decided that she would never marry him; unconsciously he had come to feel this, though his head echoed mechanically with the old boast that his grandfather was not going to score off him.

"I have my five thousand," he told himself, "and I'm going to get Gill . . ."

Nevertheless, when she exclaimed, half an hour later, that she was going home alone,

he did not try to detain her. Evidently she could not bear the mocking splendour of the great hired car. Their evening at the Gloucester, she seemed to be saying, was a long make-believe; and it was time to end it. They were not fortune's most unmistakable favourites.

He was little surprised when, in writing to thank him for his party, Gill added that she expected to be very busy for the next few weeks. The Laguna Club was trying the experiment of keeping open on Saturdays and Sundays; and in future she would be

working seven nights a week.

"Even without this," she added, "I was going to suggest that we didn't meet for a bit. I feel I'm becoming rather an obsession with you; and you're forgetting that there are other: women in the world. Isn't there one that you care for enough to marry? I should like to see you a rich man, with everything you wanted, able to lead your own life. And I should like to feel that I had not prevented this. Though you're very generous now, I feel that—if I married you—there would always be an idea at the back of your mind that I had lost you your grandfather's fortune. As indeed I did! If I hadn't been obstinate and lost control of myself . . . However! I couldn't bear it if you ever said to yourself: 'But for her, we shouldn't be living in a poky house on four hundred a year.' Therefore, dear John, if you think you ever had any obligation to me, I set you free of it." . . .

Hereafter follows The Adventure of the Rich Man Embarrassed.

#### APRIL DAY.

A HIGH wind—a wild wind—a wet wind blowing—
April running down the hill with flowers in her hair,
The wayside pools are fluted grey—they will not be showing
How the young girl, April, looks—when she passes there.

In the tallest maples there are red buds dripping, And blackbirds—flocks of them—shrill with their cries, A whir of them—a stir of them—a winging and dipping— Who has not seen blackbirds—under April skies?

Who has not loved blowing leaves in the April weather? Little tender, growing leaves—shimmering with light? Who is there who does not love a flock of birds together, Tilting on a topmost bough—after a long flight?

A high wind—a wild wind—a wet wind blowing—
Is there one who does not feel his heart lift high,
With April running down the hill—and maple buds showing—
And the year's first blackbirds—shrill against the sky?

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.

## MORE STORIES

#### By the

## MARQUESS OF ABERDEEN & TEMAIR, P.C., K.T., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

Lord Aberdeen, as broadcast listeners know, enjoys a wide reputation as a raconteur.

Here are some more stories from his well-filled wallet.

T is usually more difficult to write a story than to tell one viva voce. In the latter case there are, of course, the advantages of expression and intonation; moreover, a story should bubble up like air in water, spontaneously, and this process is usually facilitated by some incident or item in conversation.

However, it may be hoped that in the present attempt the excellent Latin motto solvitur ambulando will operate, and that as we jog along sufficient sequence may be obtained.

And, as a start has somehow to be made, I shall utilise something which, appropriately, as will be seen, was recently imparted to me at the Lyceum Club, that pleasant resort where woman's wit (and wisdom) may always in large measure be found.

The item was this. A certain clergyman and his wife, finding it difficult, with the small stipend available, to make ends meet, determined that between them they would themselves perform most of the household work. Naturally the chief share fell to the wife, and in particular all the cooking. The husband, however, arranged, by removing a partition, to have a small apartment opening into the kitchen, whence warmth could be obtained, thus effecting a saving of fuel. The plan worked well enough, except that the wife when busy at the range liked also to maintain conversation, even when her husband wished to devote his thoughts in quietude to the preparation of a sermon. On one such occasion he interrupted the wife's remarks by inquiring, "My dear, do you know why a wife is like an umbrella?" She: "No, why?" He: "Because it's often difficult to make it shut up." She: "You've got it wrong, my dear; 'tis true a wife may be compared to an umbrella-and for two reasons-first, because originally she came from ribs, and next, because she is so often tied to a stick."

I like that little story because it furnishes a sort of antidote to the disproportionate number of stories emanating from what somebody described as the "unfair sex," wherein the members of the other sex are represented as inconsequent, etc., and especi-

ally as unduly talkative.

This practice is represented in such anecdotes as two which are contained in a volume published by Ernest Benn, Ltd., thus:—A lady was consulting a physician with reference to restlessness on the part of her husband. After a few inquiries the doctor wrote a prescription, and handing it to the lady remarked, "This will have a soporific effect." "Thank you," said the lady, "and when shall I give it to my husband?" The doctor: "No, madam, it is intended for yourself."

The other, in the same line, describes a doctor writing a prescription for a lady, who, however, continues conversation, which hinders the doctor from attending to his prescription; so, without looking up, he says, "By the way, will you please show me your tongue?" Absolute silence ensues, while the doctor continues in an absentminded manner to complete his writing; then, looking up, he says, "Ah, yes, thank you, that seems all right."

This notion, as to the talkative tendency, finds expression in the conundrum, "In which month of the year do women talk least?" Of course it is a matter of estimate; and when put orally, it is curious that the question often does not evoke a prompt and correct answer. I have never seen the query in print, or writing, and I shall leave it to readers to discover the clue.

As to the supposed tendency referred to, anyone who has attended, for instance,

dinners where men only are present, could testify to the unceasing flow of conversation. I am not forgetting that the story with which I started is in a manner based on the tradition referred to, but in that case, of course, the point is the repartee.

By the way, the most curious application

way and uttered a benediction on the vessel and all on board. On this, the officer in command said, "I am afraid I have forgotten the repartee to that, my Lord."

I am sure we could do with a good many more naval yarns than seem to be in circulation. There must surely be a large stock;

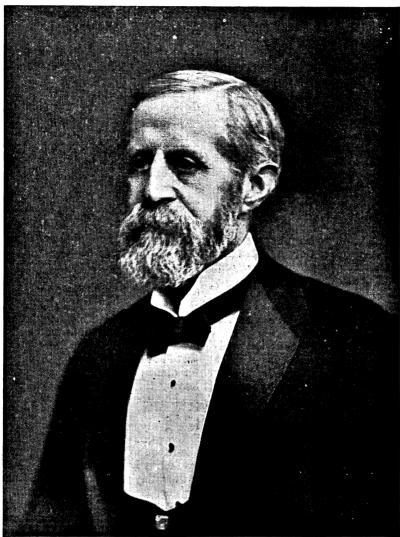


Photo by] [Fred Hardie THE RIGHT HON. THE MARQUESS OF ABERDEEN AND TEMAIR.

of the expression "repartee" which I have ever heard was mentioned to me lately by my friend, Admiral Sir Arthur Farquhar, K.C.B. It occurred thus. The officer in command of a gunboat in Chinese waters had invited the Bishop of the diocese to come on board, where he was entertained to luncheon. When leaving, the Bishop turned at the gang-

but probably the proverbial modesty, or reticence, of the typical naval man produces reserve. I shall, however, venture to quote one which, appropriately, was told by the Earl of Selborne, when First Lord of the Admiralty. A young midshipman's father—a retired Admiral—hearing that his son was to be stationed at a certain port, and

remembering that an old crony of his, an Admiral of note, lived in that neighbourhood, sent a letter of introduction for the lad to present to the distinguished officer. In due time the youth called and presented his introduction. After reading it the old Admiral said, "So you've joined the Navy; fool of the family, eh?" To this the lad replied, in most respectful tone, "Oh no, sir, they've changed all that, sir, since your time, sir."

Probably the most fertile field for repartee is to be found in the sallies between Bench and Bar. Perhaps one of the neatest of these is this. A lawyer, by way of giving an imaginary illustration in support of his argument, said, "For instance, suppose I were to see your Lordship going into a publichouse." But the Judge instantly intervened with the remark, "You mean coming in, Mr. So-and-so?"

The advantage has by no means always remained with the Bench. There is, for instance, the story of how a Judge made a playful hit against the witty Irish lawyer Curran, when a donkey outside a country court-house was heard to bray. "One at a time, if you please, Mr. Curran," said the Judge. The lawyer bided his time, and when the Judge was delivering his charge, and the donkey was again heard to bray, he rose to complain that there was such an echo that he could scarcely hear what his Lordship was saying.

And there is another, perhaps less well-known tale, in which an Irish lawyer also figures. A certain Lord Chancellor had as his fellow-traveller during a railway journey a Mr. Murphy, who practised at the English Bar. He was maintaining conversation, but apparently the Lord Chancellor was more inclined for a nap, for he suddenly remarked to his companion (who was of portly build), "You are getting very stout; you will be as fat as a porpoise if you go on like that!" To which Murphy replied, "A porpoise! But that would be fit company for the Great Seal."

But I must not linger with repartee, though the topic is tempting. Just one more, however, quite outside the legal grouping

A young man was playing a piano. When he had finished he advanced towards a Professor of Music who happened to be sitting in a corner of the room, and remarked, "That's a wonderful piece I have been playing; the melody just haunts me." To this the Professor retorted: "Haunts you, does it? Well, I wouldn't wonder at that, seeing that you murdered it!"

The same phrase might sometimes be applied to the mishandling of a story. Usually such mishandling is merely rather provoking; but when the tale refers to an individual the mauling may be more serious. Here is an instance. Mr. Gladstone was not only one of the busiest but one of the most punctual of men. On one occasion his punctuality proved to be a snare. It was during a visit to Norwich for an important political meeting, and he was the guest of the highly respected head of an important firm, manufacturers of a much-used condiment

Various people were invited to meet the distinguished visitor; and Mr. Gladstone, having been informed that the dinner-hour was seven o'clock, entered the drawingroom, according to his wont, precisely at that time. But instead of finding the room only partly filled, he was surprised to observe that, apparently, all the guests had arrived, and this led him to exclaim to his daughter. who afterwards told me of the incident, "Helen, we seem to be all mustered!" Miss Helen put her finger to her lip, by way of warning her father that that particular word might be misunderstood, and probably the remark, having been addressed to herself, had not been heard by the bystanders. But somehow the little episode became known; and, incredible though it may seem, it has been twisted into an absolutely false aspect; for I have myself heard it narrated that Mr. Gladstone, having been kept waiting for dinner, was annoyed, and when, before leaving the drawing-room, the two sons of his host were brought up to be introduced, he remarked, after shaking hands, "And now I suppose we are all mustered."

Everyone who knows anything of Mr. Gladstone would unhesitatingly declare that no human being could be more incapable of deliberately saying anything discourteous to anyone, least of all to his hosts.

In very truth, Mr. Gladstone was, both as guest and host, a model of consideration and courtesy. And this would be the emphatic testimony of those who had the privilege of being frequently his guests, and, still more often, his host and hostess.

Of course, any confusion arising from such an incident furnishes an example of the frequent misapprehensions—often amusing—caused by the varying significance which can phonetically be attached to the same word. There is an example which might almost be described as historic, at least on the legendary side. It has often been re-

marked that some of the traditional characteristics of the Scottish race may be traced among the people of the renowned county of Yorkshire. I never heard reason assigned for this phenomenon until recently, when Mrs. Philip Snowden gave me the following explanation:

It is well known that when James VI of Scotland succeeded to the throne of England he was accompanied by a large body of Scottish folk. After awhile many of these found that their shoes, which they usually called brogues, were becoming worn out. An order was accordingly sent to Scotland for one thousand brogues to be sent to London. The message was apparently transmitted orally, from point to point. Now the word "brogue" was probably then, as now, somewhat unfamiliar to English ears, whereas the word "rogue" was extremely common, "rogue and vagabond" being a recognised phrase. Anyway, before the

message reached the Border it had been transformed to "Send one thousand rogues."

The Scottish authorities complied with alacrity, and the horde were quickly on the road. By the time they had reached Yorkshire, news as to the invasion reached London, and an order was promptly sent forbidding the further advance of the crowd, and advising their immediate return to Scotland.

The Scottish authorities, however, absolutely declined to receive them. Consequently there was nothing to be done but to allow the strangers to settle where they were.

Possibly Yorkshire people may demur to the inference as to the source of some of their excellent qualities; but, after all, the Scotch "flotsam and jetsam" had no doubt some good Scottish stuff in their composition, and it is a tribute to Yorkshire that the fusion has had such satisfactory results.

#### APRIL MARKET.

SNOW was here but yesterday
Powdering all the cobbled square,
Now the wind has blown away
Its beauty in a frosty spray
Like moonlight in the air;
And stalls are heaping with the glow
Of wares more lovely than the snow.

Oranges with golden rind, Wells of delicate delight, Paler grape-fruit gleam behind Bitter-sweet and deep as night, Daffodils, with early spring's Sunshine in their yellow wings.

Dogs and children scamper round
Near a low mint-savoury stall,
Hunting treasures on the ground,
For apples fly and scraps abound—
But liberty is not for all,
Prisoners in this laughing weather,
Head to tail and claw to feather
The patient hens lie packed together.

ROSEMARY CROFT.

## SHORT STEPS TO KNOWLEDGE

## Laurence Housman

Illustrated by I. Foord Kelceu.

TN taking short steps as she stept. Matilda Jones was an adept: Mamma, corrective of her stride. Would say, "Oh, do not walk so wide!" And trained her thus from day to day For walking in the narrow way.



"You see, my dear," Mamma explained,

"Walking with me, there's nothing gained By going fast; for, soon or late.

You know that you will have to wait.

I walk as I was taught to do

By my Mamma; and so must you.



"If you walk fast-'tis truth I tell-

Your ankles will begin to swell.

Into its bones your blood will charge

And make those little feet grow large.

You now wear 'fives': Mamma declines

To change your shoes to number nines."





So, in the grip of number fives,
Poor young Matilda Jones contrives
To go her walks, till on her toes
The sprouting corns spring up in rows;
And now—though why we cannot tell—
Her ankles have begun to swell.

And though sometimes, with unrehearsed Effect, the side-elastics burst,
The cobbler puts them right again;
A stitch in time restores the strain:
And small Matilda from afar
Walks in the ways of Grandmamma.

Were this the end, were this the close And climax of Matilda's woes, I would not trouble to recount Mere details of such small amount; But now the modest, meek and mild Matilda is no more a child.





She lives, a relic of an age
When filial virtue was the rage;
She's known as "old Matilda Jones";
The blood has charged into her bones;
Her boots are big: she now wears men's,
And has to go in number tens.

## THE RED OUTCAST

### By DUDLEY HOYS

HERE was a rather worried look in John Harrington's eyes. "After what you've told me, Paul," he said, "I'm afraid one of us will have to spend Christmas up at Tahkt-i-Rishad."

"I'm afraid so, sir." Paul Ashley glanced out at the sunlit maidan, a plain of yellow, sterile dust stretching to the rocky slopes beyond, then turned back with a rueful smile on his lean face. "It's jolly bad luck, considering how we've been looking forward to our little celebration here. But things at Rishad are decidedly ticklish, and the men have to be watched. If we could stamp out this confounded traffic in hashish, there'd be no more trouble. As it is, a lot of the Bakhtiari are half mad with the drug."

Harrington gave a slight shiver. knew the effects of hashish only too well. Twenty years here at Bedrahz, on the Persian borders, spent very faithfully in the service of the Eastern Oil Company, had taught him that the chief curse of both Persian and Arab was a fatal addiction to the most fiendish drug known to humanity. It made men horrible, worse than beasts. Yet a certain sect, centuries ago, had even elevated its use to a religion. And though in these last few years the Company had made desperate efforts to stamp out the traffic, it still flourished to a dangerous degree among the local nomads. Here in Bedrahz itself there could be no fear of any outbreak, any sudden fanatical uprising. In his capacity as the Company's local manager, responsible for a fortune in plant and machinery, Harrington had taken good care to be confident of safety. The native gendarmerie were well trained and reliable.

But the new depôt at Rishad was a different proposition. Isolated by ten miles of difficult country, it had yet to be connected by telephone. They had transported valuable plant there, to deal with the recently discovered oil area. Several hundred Kurdish labourers had been established in a camp. But, as Ashley had said, the place needed careful watching. Those uncertain

neighbours, the Bakhtiari tribesmen, were ever capable of a swift and treacherous raid.

"It's a great pity." Harrington tapped out his pipe. "One man missing from our Christmas reunion will spoil it. Sanderson, Vaughn and Walters have been making all sorts of secret and wonderful preparations. Vaughn's had some special records of carols sent out for his gramophone. And Evelyn—well, you can see what she's been doing." He smiled, pointing to the paper chains and festoons stretching from the walls of beaten mud.

Mention of Evelyn, Harrington's daughter, brought a tender light to Ashley's grey eyes. The only white girl in Bedrahz, she had come out a year ago, in spite of her father's warnings that the East held more dirt than romance, and that she would be bored to tears within a few weeks. Harrington's prophecy proved wrong. With five young men-none of whom had seen anything feminine since he landed, unless the term can be applied to the black and shapeless bundles denoting the belles of Bedrahz she could scarcely sigh over lack of interest. For a little while her favours seemed equally Then, gradually, they began to realise that Ashley was the lucky man. When the two became engaged, they offered their congratulations with generous envy and told themselves that the manager had displayed great lack of sense in not having more daughters.

Watching Ashley now, Harrington laughed. "As long as you two are together, you won't care a tuppenny cuss about our celebration. No wandering off to-morrow evening, mind! You've got to stay and swell the festivities."

"Unless I'm at Rishad."

"Nonsense, Paul! There's no need for you to take your chance with the others. As Moreton's up there now, we can't include him, but Sanderson, Vaughn and Walters can draw lots for it. After all, your job here's political, not executive."

"All the same, sir, I'll take my chance with the rest. It'll be a rotten Christmas

for the one who has to spend it on his own up there, and it wouldn't be fair to stand out of the draw."

"But suppose you click for Rishad? Evelyn will be frightfully disappointed."

"I know. But it can't be helped. I think she'll agree with me that I ought to stand in with the rest." He stared out to the north, where buzzards drifted lazily across a sky of steel. "I'd give a lot to know how they're managing to smuggle this hashish through. Somebody big is at the back of it, somebody with a pretty cute intelligence service here. It's so well organised that I'm beginning to suspect—" Ashley paused, a strange expression on his face.

The manager gazed at him curiously. "Well?"

"It may sound incredible, sir. But I'm beginning to suspect Haidar Khan!"

'What!" Harrington almost jumped out of his chair. "Haidar Khan!" He might well feel surprised. The wealthiest and most respected merchant in Bedrahz, Haidar Khan was regarded as a trusted friend of the Company. Peace and commerce, he had often declared, depended on each other. His contract to supply the Kurdish labourers with rations was carried out at reasonable rates. The manager's house and headquarters were rented from him. His was the chief voice in the government of the town. And any day in the bazaar he could be seen listening to the pleas of the poor and needy, stroking his thin black beard and pondering over what form of help he should give.

"My dear fellow!" Harrington was recovering from his astonishment at last. "It seems impossible! What on earth put

the idea into your head?"

"Several little things." Ashley leaned forward, and there was something tense in his attitude. "I won't describe them, because, in themselves, they prove nothing. I'd rather not go into details, sir, before I've got my case cut and dried. But if you consider the position, you'll realise that my suspicions aren't so extraordinary as they appear. Haidar Khan is the one native in this town with real ability. He hears of everything. We even let him know semiprivate affairs of the Company. Agreed, he makes a lot of money out of us, and he's hardly likely to want to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. But he also knows that the biggest outbreak wouldn't drive us from the country. We'd merely get more men and spend more money to quell it. There's a huge profit in hashish. Hashish stirs up a blood-lust among the Bakhtiari, and a consequent demand for arms. He's in a position to smuggle them through and make another huge profit. I believe those so-called beggars he talks to in the bazaar are really his spies."

"This is all very well," said the manager doubtfully, "but it doesn't prove any-

thing."

"Quite, sir. That's why I'd rather say no more about it until I've collected solid evidence. Pardon my scaremongering at Christmas time," went on Ashley, changing to a lighter tone. "What about calling the others in now and drawing lots for this confounded duty at Rishad?"

"Very well." Harrington rang a bell, and a native clerk appeared. Two minutes later, Sanderson, Vaughn, Walters, and Evelyn were hearing the manager's explana-

tion.

"I'm awfully sorry," he concluded. "But it simply can't be helped. It's too risky to leave Rishad without anybody in charge for a night. One of you will have to eat his Christmas pudding alone there in state."

Evelyn's blue eyes looked very disappointed. She gave her fair head a queer little toss. "Blow Rishad! What right has it to interfere with my Christmas arrangements? I could say something thoroughly rude about it."

"So could I, my dear—a much ruder word than yours. But there you are. Being such a conscientious person, I've got to take precautions." He turned to the men. "Ashley suggests cutting for it. The lowest to be unlucky."

"I'm coming into it. Yes, I am," Ashley insisted, as they started to protest. He drew out a pack of cards and grinned at them. "Though you can ill spare my celebrated charm from the festive board, fair play's a jewel. The highest will share risks with the most humble." He made a mock bow to Walters, with whom he was always ragging.

They gathered round the manager's desk to cut. Ashley's luck was certainly out, for he drew a two, against a seven, a ten, and a queen. Evelyn made a rueful grimace as

she saw the result.

"Oh, Paul!" Her eyes looked up into his with a glance of dismay. To have to spend their first Christmas apart was a sharp disappointment. But she had to admit that it was only fair he should take

his chance. So she coaxed her drooping mouth into a smile.

"Hard lines, Ashley." Vaughn laid a hand on his arm. "Look here, let me take your place."

"No, thanks. Very sweet of you, but---"

"Good for both of them," said Harrington, with genial cynicism. "Daresay there'll come a time when they'll jump at the chance to get away from each other for twenty-four hours—and longer."

"Father, you're a pig."

"I must be, my dear, remembering how I've managed to swallow some of your worst attempts at cooking." Then he got up abruptly and walked to a narrow window in the back wall, opening on to a shaded courtyard.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Walters,

while the others stared, puzzled.

"I thought I heard a sort of scuffling sound." He glanced about the empty court. "Must have imagined it." He returned to his chair.

Outside, crouching in the shadow of a huge old vine growing by the window, Haidar Khan stood and held his breath. Inwardly, he was cursing himself for making the sound that had attracted attention. Hundreds of times before had he come to this spot beneath the window, eavesdropping for any private news that might be picked up. It was simple to get here in secret. A certain flagstone in the courtyard worked on a secret pivot, screening an underground passage leading to his house. It had been the chief factor in his decision to offer the building to the Eastern Oil Company, many years ago. Private information, he had told himself, would be potential money. Besides, if they ever got wind of any of his dark dealings, he would learn of the fact from his listeningpost. This was the first occasion he had been careless.

"Fool!" he muttered. "Allah has no mercy for the incautious."

Presently, as there seemed to be no further signs of investigation, his yellow face relaxed. He breathed more freely, and a wolfish smile twisted his thin, bearded lips. He had overheard the entire conversation between Ashley and Harrington. It confirmed what he already feared—that this lean young political officer, with eyes that seemed to pierce the most hidden secrets, suspected him of hashish traffic.

"May Shaitan blind him!" His bony hands curved like talons. His dark eyes glinted redly. Those who probed secrets

must pay for their curiosity. And in this case the payment—

His lips drew back, and the bony hands twined together. It had come to him that Kismet was offering favours. Had he not overheard that Ashley Effendi would be alone at Rishad to-morrow? Could he not lure him out into the desert, which seldom

gave up its secrets?

"To-morrow is this feast they call Krizmas. It is the best time to act." Then he stiffened abruptly. There was a rustling noise behind the wall of the courtyard. The next instant a long snout appeared on the top of the wall, followed by a rakish body. It was a pariah, half jackal, half dog. Haidar Khan knew the creature, for it was often here. The white man seemed to make a pet of it.

Afraid that it might give the alarm, he sidled across to the flagstone. The wild dog snarled, leapt down from the wall, and came towards him. Its jaws were wide with

menace.

"Imchi!" he said, between his teeth, and raised a threatening arm. Never had he heard of a pariah that would face a blow, and he expected this one to slink away. He was mistaken. The dog bristled, jumped at him.

More by luck than judgment, his swinging arm caught it in the ribs. As it toppled over, he grabbed desperately at the flagstone, turned it back. With frantic speed he lowered himself into the passage, closed the flag over his head. He heard the dog snarl furiously and utter short, racking barks.

Roused by the din, the party in the manager's room came hurrying out into the courtyard by a side door.

"What's the matter, Mahaila?" called

Ashley, running forward.

At the sound of the voice the dog stopped barking. His stump of a tail wagged, and his lean muzzle twitched into something very like a grin. He bounded across, licked Ashley's outstretched hand, nuzzled Evelyn's skirt, then went back to the flag and started sniffing.

"A rat, I expect," said Walters from behind. "Suppose he just missed it, and announced his annoyance to the world in the usual way. Come on, Mahaila, you old maniac. You'll sniff yourself dizzy. Come here, sir."

Mahaila whined, and went on sniffing.

"Come here, sir," ordered Ashley.

This time the command was effective. Mahaila loped forward and stood at his feet. "Silly old boy," said Ashley, stroking a furry ear.

It was a queer friendship, in a place where outcast pariahs were despised. Two years back, while riding through the rocky desert

to the north, he had come across a little drama of the wilds. In a sudden turn of a narrow ravine he encountered a red dog fighting frantically to preserve its puppies from three hulking hyenas. Though it bit and lunged gallantly, there could have been but one end. One paw was torn, and a big wound showed in its shoulder.

With the instinctive sympathy that urges a man to help the losing side, Ashley had galloped at the attackers, and the three ugly brutes turned and fled. But the wounded dog stood its ground, defiant above the huddled puppies. A biscuit flung down and a few quiet words changed defiance to a sort of passive mistrust. Soon it allowed him to come quite close. His confident touch on the rough head was reassuring. Before he left it that day the red dog had actually licked his hand. Afterwards, he encoun-

tered it often on his northward rides. Deep in that animal brain must have dwelt gratitude, for the dog would come out from the rocks and fawn before him. He christ-

ened it Mahaila, its shape suggesting those long, low, piratical boats that went gliding down the Persian Gulf. With the passage of time, the pups grew big and went their own various ways. Mahaila's mate seemed to have left him. His

confidence
in man increasing,
Mahaila
took to
visiting Bedrahz. He
would often
lope up to

" He drew her to him and kissed her, while the red dog squatted on his haunches and blinked as if mildly shocked."

that broad, white house, gambol before his friends, and gain a reward of meaty bones. But the call of the wilds was too strong to let him settle there. He divided his time between the desert and the city, and his worship of Ashley was a thing of wonder.

To-day, as the party returned to the house, he trotted at his divinity's feet, his brown

eyes shining with affection.

"There's nobody looking but Mahaila," said Ashley, drawing Evelyn into an alcove. "I'm awfully sorry about our spoilt Christmas, dear—but we'll make up for it on Boxing Day, when Sanderson relieves me." He drew her to him and kissed her, while the red dog squatted on his haunches and blinked as if mildly shocked.

Later, he followed Ashley into the manager's room, and sat quietly as the two men

discussed affairs at Rishad.

"Your hint about Haidar Khan is pretty disturbing," said Harrington. "But somehow, Paul, I can't really believe he's at the bottom of the trouble."

"Then don't think about it, sir, until I've proved my words. After Christmas, I'm going to concentrate on the job of catching the old scoundrel red-handed." Ashley's jaw set grimly.

And in the bazaar, Haidar Khan was vowing to himself that before this feast of "Krizmas" had ended, he would silence for ever a young man who knew too much.

Perched on a wooden bench, Haidar Khan sat in the bazaar and stared impassively at the yellow sunshine. His claw-like hand held the mouthpiece of a narghile, and at his elbow stood a glass of black coffee. A benevolent old man to regard; placid and kindly seemed those dark eyes, venerable that bearded mouth. Few knew how those eyes could flame murderously and that mouth curve like a wolf's.

Passers greeted him, and he returned their salutations. One, a water-carrier clad in an undressed goatskin, stopped and mumbled something. Haidar Khan gave him a coin. A Kurdish labourer touched his skull-cap and spoke. He received a reply, but no coin was proffered. A muezzin from the mosque chatted with him a full five minutes, accepted a puff at the fragrant narghile. These men, under pretence of gossip or begging for charity, brought news concerning his hashish traffic.

As the reports came in, Haidar Khan grew more and more venomous at the thought that this profitable trade of his was threatened by extinction, that the shadow of prison loomed near. His methods had been subtle, sinuous as the flex of a cobra. And yet——

He pressed his thin lips together. Murder was nothing, a frequent item of policy. But opportunity had to be found. The murder of Ashley Effendi must take the outward form of an accident, leaving no clue. It was difficult to create a plan embracing both

certainty and safety.

Outside, the sun began to turn on its hot flood in earnest. Though it was winter, this stretch of the Persian border had scant respite from heat. The voices of merchants, clatter of donkey's hoofs and creak of gharris waned to a subdued drone. Beyond, on the desert, islands of mirage were trembling, inverted, over the horizon. Here, in the shadow of the bazaar, with the faint reek of dust, endive and flower scents blending, the air was cooler. Man could think, and summon up visions.

Haidar Khan's vision showed him a tortuous ravine in the rocky country south of Rishad, the only track fit for a horse en route to Bedrahz. At the side of the ravine dropped a stone cliff, thirty feet deep. A startled horse there must throw its rider to

destruction. . . .

A startled horse. One that leapt forward suddenly when something sharp stabbed its flank. . . .

"Allah is great," murmured Haidar Khan, thinking of a certain blow-pipe he had obtained from a Bawi tribesman. It would project a needle thirty yards. A man hiding behind the rocks above could never miss his aim. The mildest horse would rear under its sting, and most likely it would fall—certainly it would fall if a strong, thin cord were fixed across the track in front, at a height to catch the plunging legs.

"Ah!" The vision had showed Ashley Effendi lying at the bottom of the cliff, smashed and silent. "May he burn in hell," said Haidar Khan. For a moment the mask of mildness slipped aside, and his eyeballs

turned flaming and bloodshot.

Jackals and vultures would soon gather to the feast. Only bones would be left to tell the story of Ashley Effendi's accident

—for it could appear naught else.

But how to turn that vision into reality?

To-morrow, at this feast of Krizmas, Ashley Effendi remained alone at Rishad. Could he receive a message, summoning him to Bedrahz, then—

Haidar Khan chuckled and spat. Could

he not write English? Could he not copy the script of Harrington Effendi, many of whose notes he had kept? Let Ashley Effendi receive this note—

"Come at once. Evelyn very ill. John Harrington."

It would bring him riding out of Rishad faster than a buzzard to the feast. . . .

It was at this moment that Mahaila, trotting through the bazaar, espied his enemy and drew back on his haunches. Scent of Haidar Khan came into those keen nostrils and made the red spine hairs bristle. From the working throat rose an angry snarl.

"Imchi!" cried Haidar Khan, recognising the dog. His hand closed on a metal

tray, and he hurled it savagely.

Dodging the missile, Mahaila sprang forward, fangs bared. He was quivering with lust for revenge. But several men near by shouted, and raised their arms. The odds were too threatening, and Mahaila scurried away towards the desert, growling harshly.

"Spawn of Shaitan!" muttered Haidar Khan, and resumed his pondering. The message to Ashley Effendi could be taken by some bazaar idler, some criminal whose secret he knew. There were many. He might choose Ibn Nafa. He could not refuse, since a word could send him to the gallows for his share in that murder at Salayiat last week. Afterwards, Ibn Nafa could be packed off to another part of Persia.

Even if the fall did not kill Åshley Effendi—why, he would be senseless awhile, under the smiting sun. That alone should be sufficient. Later, vultures watching above and jackals slavering expectantly below might take their fill. None would come out to search for him, since none at Bedrahz would know he had left Rishad.

Haidar Khan nodded. Of a certainty this cursed Britisher would perish. But no

mistake must be made.

"He who works for himself, works best." A true saying. He alone would go out to the ravine, prepare the cord, and shoot the needle from the blow-pipe. Lest his absence be noticed, he would leave word that he had gone to visit a sick cousin at Zelujah.

Haidar Khan permitted himself a twisted smile. He remembered a phrase, overheard from the lips of these white men to-day,

"A merry Krizmas."

"Ashley Effendi, thou shalt provide a merry Krizmas indeed for the jackals and the hawks."

There was drowsy silence over the camp

at Rishad. The stolid Kurds, having no work to do, lay about sleeping. One or two were chanting a native song, low and monotonous, in a minor key. But their voices scarcely disturbed the hush. The only sign of movement showed in the air, where a hawk stalled lazily across the arc of blue.

Ashley sat in his tent, smoking. The bearer had cleared away his Christmas lunch—a tinned chicken, and a tinned pudding somewhat difficult to tackle in this sun-

drenched spot.

"Hardly seasonable weather," he was telling himself whimsically. "Wonder if they have a real, old-fashioned Christmas at home for once, after the best Christmascard style? Phew! A spot of it would be welcome here." He slipped off his drill tunic. "Those lucky devils won't be feeling it so much at Bedrahz. Mud walls and shadow knock twenty degrees off the temperature. Oh, well, I shall be down there to-morrow." His grey eyes softened at the thought of a delightful day with Evelyn. "Leave isn't so terribly far away. Here's to it." He drained his gin sling gratefully.

Evelyn would be coming back on the same boat, and they were to be married as soon as she could collect her trousseau in England. He'd like to get accounts squared with

Haidar Khan before he left.

"The old blackguard's the prime mover in this hashish business. I'd stake my life on it. Once his trickery is settled, there'll be no more trouble with the Bakhtiari." He looked out to the north, across the still, eternal dust. Somewhere beyond, those dark-robed wanderers were prowling. Sometimes they brought dates and goat's-milk to the camp, smiling and gesticulating. But they were a doubtful quantity, never to be trusted while hashish was available. It roused their worse instincts, urged them towards one of those sudden, sweeping raids for which there must be constant watch.

"Confound them for upsetting my Christmas! I'd like to rope in the whole bally lot, and make them do some honest, hard work. That would cool their ardour. If

The next moment he had jumped to his feet. There was a scampering noise outside, the flap of the tent swung back, and a panting native appeared. The forehead he touched respectfully was dripping with perspiration.

"Effendi." The man handed him a rote.

Puzzled, Ashley tore it open.

"Come at once," he read. "Evelyn very

The colour drained from his face. He caught his breath, stared at the waiting

messenger.

"How long have you been bringing this? What is the matter with the white lady? When was she taken ill?" he demanded quickly, in local dialect.

But the man merely shook his head. He had been told to bring the note, he said,

and that was all he knew.

Ashley ran out of the tent, shouting for his horse to be saddled at once. Care of the camp mattered little now. Evelyn had first claim. In any case, Harrington had told him to come, and no doubt he was sending someone along post-haste to take his place.

Anxiety clouded his eyes as he galloped away southwards through the dust. He found himself murmuring a passionate prayer for her safety. It seemed almost impossible she could be ill. Only yesterday she had looked so young and beautiful and full of life. But this accursed country had diseases that smote without warning. Harrington wouldn't have sent for him unless her condition were serious.

"Oh, God, make her well!" he whis-

pered, and urged his horse faster.

Presently, racked by his troubled thoughts, he entered the rocky area that lay between him and Bedrahz. The track was narrow and smooth, unsafe for any pace beyond a walk. But worry left no room for caution. He merely checked his mount to a hand canter, the hoof-beats echoing with a hollow ring among those stony ledges.

To Haidar Khan, crouching behind a boulder above the ravine, the sounds came louder, louder. He stooped lower, his eyes flickering with an intensity of staring. Excitement brought drops of moisture to his yellow face. His bony hands twitched. The brown burnous he wore shook with the

trembling of his body.

"Allah guide my aim," he muttered fervently, raising the blow-pipe. Gazing at a bend in the ravine, he saw Ashley canter round the corner. Thirty yards . . . Twenty

vards . . .

Haidar Khan lifted the blow-pipe to his lips. With scarcely a sound, the steel needle flicked out of the tube, stabbed home into those heaving brown flanks.

With a whinny of pain and terror, the horse reared, plunged forward. Ashley clutched the reins desperately, tried to pull

back the extended head. But the most he could do was to keep it on the track. It dashed round the next curve.

Then, swift as a bullet, it happened. Those lashing legs tripped. Ashley flung out his hands, grabbed wildly at empty air. Horse and rider went hurtling over, down on to the rocks below. Came two heavy thuds, and they lay limp and still. It needed no second glance to tell Haidar Khan that the horse had broken its neck. But what of the man?

Cautiously he emerged from behind the boulder, and began to let himself down the craggy face of the cliff. The huddled

human figure never stirred.

"Allah il Allah!" He craned over his victim and gazed with triumphant eyes. The accursed Britisher was not dead. His breast moved slightly. But one leg was strangely bent under him, telling of a snapped bone. A great gash marred the fair head. What chance of life in this empty place?

Haidar Khan's curving fingers searched the pockets, seized avidly on the forged note they sought. That gone, no clue was

left.

The thin lips curled back cruelly. The dark eyes went bloodshot. "Thou canst probe no more secrets, my friend." His hand fondled a dagger at his waist. For a moment he hesitated, burning to plunge it home and hasten the end. But the cunning of his brain whispered a warning. If, by some remote chance, a passer should find him before the scavengers had completed their work——

Haidar Khan shook his head, spurned the body with a contemptuous foot. Then, gloating, he scrambled up the cliff to where the broken cord lay across the track. Hastily he stowed it inside the folds of his burnous, and hurried out of the ravine, taking a devious way that would lead him back to Bedrahz as if he had come from Zelujah.

His footsteps died away. Hot silence reigned. Somewhere in the cloudless sky a tiny speck appeared. It was joined

by another, and yet another.

Slowly the spots came lower, wheeling. Presently they took shape, rusty black vultures gathering from nowhere for the feast.

A furtive form appeared over the edge of the ravine. It stared, edged forward a little, twitched a hungry snout. A second jackal glided up among a jumble of rocks

to the left. The scavengers of the land, Instinct rose supreme. Ears back, tongue watching the scavengers of the air, had traced the chance of a meal. Soon the vultures were on the ground, their lidless eyes foul and intent. They formed an inner circle to the ring of jackals squatting and watching intently. Somewhere to the west Mahaila checked a lonely prowl, gazing uncertainly ahead. He had seen those low shapes, collecting from the void and all slinking towards one point. Lately the scavenging instinct had been kept down by contact with human beings. But it was still there, and sight "Gazing at a bend in the ravine, he saw Ashley canter round the corner. Thirty yards. . . . Twenty yards. Haidar Khan lifted the blow-pipe to his lips."

of those gathering forms roused it to the surface. He whined, wrinkled his muzzle.

lolling, he streaked forward towards the distant rocks.

Two miles he ran, with the easy lope of his kind. He reached the ravine, where a circle of fangs glinted in the sunlight. Then a queer light entered the brown eyes. His short tail rose, and his long muzzle pointed straight and stiff. Clean through the ring of scavengers he burst, dashing up to the silent Ashley and licking the pale face. Emboldened by his example, the scavengers closed in, jackals champing and slavering.

They met a biting, tearing fury. Love gave Mahaila the strength of a dozen. His fangs snapped and ripped among the ghouls, the rage of a maniac in his snarls. One jackal he slit from throat to flank. A vulture lost half the dingy feathers from its breast.

The fight was short and sharp. For one greedier than the rest to try to seize all the spoil was something they had experienced before. But never had they met this kind of murder incarnate. Screaming, the vultures flapped cumbrously away. The jackals yapped with surprise, drew back, vanished into the desert.

Once again hot silence reigned over the ravine, while the sun glared down on the motionless Ashley and the lean, red creature that licked his hand and whined.

For several minutes Mahaila did his best to rouse response. His rough tongue licked faster, his fore-paws poked gently, his muzzle nudged the limp arm. Then he gave short, playful barks, bounding away in invitation to gambol. But Ashley never stirred.

At last the red dog squatted on his haunches, puzzled and forlorn. This was something he could not understand. Waiting in vain for the voice that never came, he stared miserably at that beloved form. Fear and distress set him whimpering.

A slight movement made him give a joyful bark and start forward, tail wagging. The unconscious Ashley had lapsed into delirium. Mahaila's tongue licked the upturned face eagerly. His only reward was a series of dull moans, the tiniest fluttering of one hand.

Eyes sorrowful, tail drooping, the red dog stood and gazed. Gradually, out of his vague strivings, was born a sense of disaster. The half-civilised side of him knew sharp anguish. He huddled close, head between paws, in still desolation. He wanted to aid that silent figure, and his helplessness to do so goaded unbearably.

Again Ashley's lips moved, uttering low

groans. In the remote depths of the red dog's brain grew a resolve. At a broad white house, five miles away, were friends. Memory of their kindness gave him courage, brought all the intelligence of the dog tribe to his aid.

His head rose. Suddenly he barked, caught up in his teeth the crushed sun helmet lying near Ashley's side. His stump of a tail beat furiously. Straight for Bedrahz he sped, feet pattering over

the rock in straining flight.

Soon foam flecked the red coat. The helmet threatened to choke his panting jaws. But he raced on steadily, sharp ears back. The mosque of Ali Gharbi at Bedrahz loomed up, a faint white outline. A broad blur changed to a fringe of palms, dark green, metallic. He left the rocks behind, loped out upon the baked and crumbling dust. Drifting into his distended jaws, it dried his throat, altered his breathing to racked gasps. But sight of the straggling town, a shimmer of walls streaked by shadow, urged him even faster.

The party at the manager's house were having their Christmas tea. Evelyn, cool and charming in a light frock, sat at the head of the table, and of the five men present, only her father seemed to appreciate the iced Christmas cake more than the hostess who dispensed it. Sanderson and Evelyn had just pulled a cracker, and were reading aloud some ridiculous motto about hearts, loves, and doves, when a frenzied bark echoed in the courtyard.

"The jolly old dawg," said Walters, "come to wish us the compliments of the season. We ought to have put a bone in

his stocking yesterday."

A second frenzied bark split the drowsy air. For a moment Mahaila's lean muzzle appeared at the window as he leapt up and fell back.

"What the dickens has he got in his mouth?" Vaughn went to the door. "Come here, you old pirate, and—Good Heavens!"

The foaming Mahaila had dashed into the room, dropping a mangled sun helmet on the floor. His distressed eyes looked up at them. Whining, he ran to Harrington

and tugged at his legs.

"It's Paul's!" Evelyn had started up, her slim face drawn and frightened. "It's Paul's! Don't you see? No, I tell you, the dog isn't playing! Paul must have had an accident, and the dog's come to fetch us."

"I believe you're right. By Jove!" He was on his feet in an instant as the dog whined frantically, rushed back to the door, and stood there trembling. "He's trying to lead us somewhere, sure enough. But what could have happened? If anything had gone wrong at Rishad——"

"Oh, don't wait, don't wait!" Evelyn's breast was heaving. "Get the horses saddled." She ran to a medicine chest where brandy and bandages were kept.

"Come on, you fellows." Walters thrust his head out of the window and shouted for the grooms. The gaiety of their Christmas tea-party had been changed to a sudden, anxious wonder.

"I'll leave you in charge, Moreton," said Harrington quietly. "My dear," he added, gentle sympathy in his voice, "don't look like that. Paul knows how to look after himself."

She nodded bravely, but her mouth was pitiful. "I'm coming with you. I can't and won't stop here."

Her desire to be off was scarcely more desperate than Mahaila's. While the horses were being saddled he scampered forward and waited in a frenzy of invitation. The moment they had mounted he raced ahead, definite purpose in every line of his rakish form. That he was guiding them accurately they had no doubt. They galloped after him, Evelyn staring across the dust with a dread in her blue eyes that no courage could hide.

Straight as an arrow the dog guided them, into the rock-strewn waste to the north. Topping a ridge that overlooked the ravine, they saw an ominous circle. The men blanched, hoping against hope. Evelyn swayed in her saddle, shivering. Though their hard-driven horses responded to fresh coaxing, Mahaila outstripped the lot. His bristling shape burst upon the circle in a whirl of fury. Jackals and vultures faded away, snarling and screaming.

Wordless sounds of gratitude came from Evelyn's lips as they drew up in the ravine. In his delirium Ashley had writhed and gibbered wildly. It had been enough to keep cowardly scavengers at a distance, waiting patiently until movement ceased.

Her trembling hands lifted his head. "The water bottle," she said. "And one of you unwind the bandages." Whatever her feelings, at least she must keep steady. The fact that he was breathing gave new hope.

While she bathed the wound, Mahaila wagged his tail, jumping and wriggling in an attempt to caress the form he adored. It took Walters all his time to hold the red dog back. But when, after the wound had been patched up, and a little brandy forced between his teeth, Ashley opened his eyes and spoke feebly, Mahaila could brook no further restraint. He dived away from the grabbing hand, got his muzzle to Ashley's pale face and licked it joyously.

"Oh, Paul!" Evelyn, nearly fainting with reaction, stroked the hair back from his forehead. The men standing round have sighs of relief

heaved huge sighs of relief.

"Where am I?" he said weakly. "What's

happened?"

"Hush, dear. You mustn't talk. You've had an accident, and your leg's broken." She pushed back the fawning Mahaila and turned to the men. "Can you make a horse-litter somehow, with straps and a blanket?"

Presently the litter was ready. Walters, who had recaptured the red dog and held him firmly from any more attempts at caressing Ashley, saw the lean muzzle suddenly twitch and the spine hairs bristle. So far, anxiety for the injured man had given them little chance to wonder how the accident had happened. But now, as he watched Mahaila's queer antics, it came to him vaguely that they might give a clue to the explanation. The red dog had started sniffing at the fetlocks of the dead horse.

"Look at that!" Walters pointed in astonishment. Mahaila had gone stiff, the brown eyes glinting with fury. A low snarl came from him, and again his muzzle sniffed

intently.

Puzzled, Walters stooped over the dead horse. The fetlocks were grazed, and against the roan hairs showed several tiny light streaks—hempen threads.

Sudden suspicion flamed through his mind. He picked them off carefully. None of their horses was ever hobbled. In camp, they were merely attached by a head rope to a picketing peg. Why, then, were these frayed threads——

He closed his hand hastily as Mahaila thrust his snout at it and growled. To the red dog's acute scent, those threads brought the presence of a bitter enemy. Haidar Khan had carried the cord inside his burnous, and though a long time had passed since he had handled it, to Mahaila the scent was vivid.

"All right, old boy. Calm down." He

patted the uneasy head, and joined the party on the track. Ashley was lying on the litter, quite conscious now and smiling palely.

While he spoke, his hands sought his pockets for the note.
"It's gone!" He struggled up on one

quite conscious now and siming It's gone! He struggled up on on



had lost control of his horse coming through the ravine and pitched abruptly into space. elbow, only to be pressed back into the litter by Evelyn's tender hands.



Mahaila, trotting quietly, raised his muzzle and gave a snarl of fury.

"You see? The dog knows the scent. Whoever sent that forged note must have fixed a cord across the track in the ravine,

broken leg, Ashley raised himself excitedly. "A thousand to one! And I've thought of a way to prove it. When we reach Bedrahz, one of you go and tell him I'm dead. Take Mahaila, and watch how he acts. Then you

can produce me suddenly, and I'll accuse him point-blank. The shock of seeing me alive will probably make him give himself

away."

At first they would not hear of it. Evelyn implored him to keep quiet, to give himself every chance to get well quickly. Ashley, with all the persistence of a sick man, swore that the quickest cure would be the proof of his theory. So in the end they let him have his way, and he gave a weak laugh.

"Sorry to be such a troublesome patient, dearest. But I simply must tackle Haidar

Khan first."

The benevolent and respected Haidar Khan was drinking coffee in the bazaar when Walters approached him with Mahaila. Immediately the red dog saw his enemy, his eyes gleamed, his tail went stiff and tense. He would have leapt in with bared teeth had not Walters' restraining grip checked him.

Haidar Khan touched his forehead and

looked up placidly.

"Ashley Effendi is dead," said Walters. "He was thrown from his horse this afternoon. We found him in the ravine among the rocks south of Tahkt-i-Rishad."

Haidar Khan never moved a muscle, but his dark eyes appeared grieved. "I am sorrowful at your news, Effendi. And surely this is his dog? Has not grief for its master driven it mad? Take care lest it bites. Ah! the loss of Ashley Effendi must be heavy upon his friends."

Walters said nothing. He was watching the narrow alley behind, through which two horses squeezed with their litter, accompanied by Harrington and his party. "A sad accident," went on Haidar Khan, turning to see why the other native idlers stared at the alley.

"Very sad for you!" came Ashley's voice, a sudden shout from the litter.

Haidar Khan had all the control of his impassive race. But this voice from the dead caught him off his guard. For a moment his face revealed the truth. He caught at the side of the bench, gave a hoarse gasp of fear and horror. Before he had recovered himself, two of the gendarmerie brought by Harrington stepped forward through the staring idlers and grasped his wrists.

The smiling Ashley looked down from the litter. "Haidar Khan," he said, "you should have used leather, not cord." He held out the hempen threads, and Mahaila, sniffing furiously, let out a savage snarl. "But we shall use cord on you, when all the proofs are collected. And then, I think, there will be no more hashish traffic."

The red dog, yearning to sink his teeth into that hated figure, dashed from Walters and flung himself at Haidar Khan. It was all they could do to pull him away, but he

quietened at Ashley's command.

"Mahaila, you wonderful old fellow, we'll give you a better Christmas dinner than you'd get off that shivering old scoundrel."

"You darling!" Evelyn ran her hand over the furry neck. "But for you, this would have been the most terrible Christmas that ever broke a girl's heart. You may be an outcast, but I wouldn't exchange you for an angel!"

The red dog merely wrinkled his muzzle

and snorted.

#### SONG.

When sunlight quickly follows\_rain,
Then is a man in loving mind,
And loneliness is pain.

When happy beams are on the glade, When happy birds in concert sing, Then learns a man to love a maid, For love's a happy thing.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.



THE AUTHOR IN A LAKE MURRAY CANOR.

# HEAD-HUNTERS OF LAKE MURRAY

- By BEATRICE GRIMSHAW
- **⊚** (With Photographs by the Author) **⊚**

LL the latter part of the day we had been running along the coast of Kiwai, that great, dark island, set among shallows and low mangrove, that produces the manliest, cleverest, and -it must be added-gloomiest race in Papua. Near sundown we had come to the real mouth of the Fly; the eighty-mile estuary lay behind us, and the banks were closing in to a width of two or three miles. Low wide skies, clouds of piled brass, purple slants of rain that went stalking across shallow lagoons; banks forested, furred in black; not a house, a plantation, a boat, or a canoe; so begins the greatest river in Papua,

The Fly pours out every day water enough to provide each separate inhabitant of earth with forty gallons. It has been explored almost to the head-waters, more than six hundred miles up. Captain Blackwood, of H.M.S. Fly, named it when he made a brief call at the river mouth in 1842. D'Albertis explored it in three successive trips, 1875-6-7. After him came Everill, Sir William MacGregor, Sir Hubert Murray, Lieutenant-Governor; an expedition of Sir Rupert Clarke's, and two or three Papuan officials, of whom Mr. L. Austin is the most notable. These traced the great river, marked out tributaries here and there, and traversed a little of the surrounding country. Once in a way traders have gone up; but there was never much to attract them. Traffic has always been scanty in the extreme; nevertheless, a great deal has been written about the Fly, its strange scenery and wild tribes; and the river has always managed, somehow, to remain "in the news." It is probably better known to the world at large than any other river of New Guinea.

With all this, one is inclined to think of the Fly as more or less civilised; to suppose that eighty years must have meant something to its history. One is wrong. A settled and progressive Government has brought; safety to the Fly delta and the surrounding coasts; has made it possible to travel up the river (provided with firearms and some common sense) and return uninjured. is the most that can be said. Eighty years have seen the making of exactly one plantation on the length and breadth of the mighty river-Madiri, a little way beyond the estuary—and of no settlement at all anywhere else.

After eighteen years spent mostly in Papua, I was curious about this matter of settlement on the Fly. A chance of ascending the river came; I took it very gladly, since the occasion was a special one, and offered the chance of doing, and seeing, a great deal in a comparatively short time. The little-known district of Lake Murray was to be visited, and an attempt made to get into communication with its headhunting tribes; the way thither lay up 300 miles of Fly and Fly tributaries; so that one would see a large area of country.

Until this trip, in February 1926, nothing larger than a forty-ton launch had ever been up the Fly. In that month, the Papuan Government decided to try the ascent of the river, and its tributary the Strickland, with the Government oil-launch Laurabada, a sturdy vessel of a hundred and eighty tons, ten feet draught. It was rather more than likely that we should stick on a mudbank half-way, since the Fly is notorious for shallows and shifting banks, but Papua is the country of long shots and odd chances; so the chance was taken. The party consisted of Sir Hubert Murray, the Lieutenant-Governor; the Hon. Leonard Murray; and Mr. Waldron, engineer; also myself, the first white woman to ascend the Fly. Two other white women had travelled up the river to a point ten or twelve miles beyond Madiri Plantation, which is situated eighty miles up the estuary; but, above that, no white woman ever had been seen.

The Laurabada for this trip took a number of Papuan native police, and a good supply of rifles, cartridges, and bayonets. Attack was not expected, but had to be prepared for, since it is never impossible, outside civilisation.

The first night in the Fly was marked by welcome relief from the fearful swarms of mosquitoes that had made the previous night at Daru Island a torment. There we had sat on deck, wrapped in all sorts of odd garments, with the little, treacherous anopheles or fever mosquito sticking up in rows like black pins over every exposed scrap of flesh, and the air all round full of the screaming hum that presages a trying night, spent under stifling berth-nets. night we lay swaying gently to the pull of the Gulf tides, quiet, cool, and at peace. The Fly was welcoming us kindly.

Madiri Plantation, next morning, marked the end of civilisation. Rubber trees, acre by acre, behind; palms on the shore of the river, with canoe sails gliding gracefully between; a bungalow house, with a husband and wife, half planters, half missionaries-tired folk, busy folk, very brave, pathetically glad to see us come, and sorry to see the Laurabada start again up-river, leaving Madiri to loneliness once more.

This was the plantation.

And afterwards wilderness, for three hundred miles up from the river mouth; country ever growing lonelier, stranger, more remote from everything one had seen and known before. . . . A trip across the edge of things and back; a journey through another dimension.

Apart from Madiri; and one or two similar small areas, there is no land suited for white settlement on the lower Fly. Three hundred miles up there is fairly high ground and soil that seems good. But who is going to settle up there-"at the back of God Speed "-when good enough land can be found right on the coasts?

The day of the Fly is not yet. Nor shall we, who are past youth now, live to

But somehow it fascinates, this huge river; more than a mile wide at Madiri, eighty miles from the mouth—often widening to two and three miles, far up, in the big lagoons; hemmed by dark secret forests, that here and there open out to show a glimpse of fairy glades, no sooner seen than gone; haunted by hundreds of huge crocodiles; policed by the stalking cassowary, who is king of his country wherever he goes, save for all-conquering man. But man has not come here. Man, on the mid-Fly, matters less than the least of the crocodiles that sleep, insolent, undisturbed, upon the endless mudbanks.

We saw no cassowaries on this trip. night, however, when we were lying at anchor, far up the river, no lights lit (you don't have riding lights on the upper Fly. "for reasons"...), I heard a strange sound in the dead of night. On the far bank, separated from the little Laurabada by more than a mile of dim, grey-silver water, rose a curious, eerie trumpeting, with a resonant rumble in it that made me realise at once that I was listening to the famous cassowary "drum." I had heard the cassowary before, but it had been one bird alone, and very far away. Now it was a herd of them apparently, and the mile of water only seemed to emphasise the brassy, resounding character of their amazing call. The cassowary is five feet high, with a huge blue and crimson helmet, and a leg that can kick like a horse's leg; being further able to do that which a horse's leg cannot—disembowel an enemy with its claws. It has been seen swimming across the Fly at a point near two miles wide,

nothing being visible but an immensely long neck topped by a blue ferce head. It is, take it all in all, about the most capable and the most determined thing that walks the earth with two clawed feet.



MADIRI PLANTATION: THE LAST SETTLEMENT ON THE FLY.

It took us two days from Madiri to reach the point known as Everill Junction, where the Fly parts into two great streams, one being known henceforward as the Strickland. Here, for the first time since leaving the lower river, signs of life began to show. We were no longer in an uninhabited wilderness. Every here and there along the banks, at intervals of a few miles, appeared the skeletons of camping grounds; poles, frames and ridge-poles of deserted huts; small clearings; trees cut down and falling into the stream.

"What are these?" I asked a wise old Papuan sergeant, who had been to Lake Murray before.

"Thass camp belong New Guinea man," he answered. "All the time, he come, he go, he don't stop, because all the time he fright along another man, come takem head belong him. Little time he stay, behind he go."

They were pathetic, those deserted camps. the temporary resting-places of a driven, scared people, who live-if it may be called living—in constant fear of murder. On these river banks, in 1914, Mr. Massey Baker saw corpses that had been left over after a successful raid—probably one raid made by the neighbouring Lake Murray natives, who are "bosses" of the river. The bodies were all headless; some of them, in addition, had been flayed as far down as the breast. Head-hunting is the chief sport, the only excitement, in the lives of Fly and Strickland natives. They attach immense importance to the possession of heads, to the preparation and the painting of their specimens, and the proper display of the finished work. They can sever a protesting fighting head as ably as a butcher can cut the throat of a sheep, although the knives of shell or bamboo generally used by them

used by them are very unsatisfactory tools. No one, so far, has succeeded in speaking to these people in their own tongue, so that the reasons for many ceremonies and customs connected with head-hunting are unknown:

it is supposed, however, that the idea of trophies representing skill and daring mingles with the well-known savage conviction that the strength of a murdered man passes into his murderer.

Cannibalism is also a part of their lives; but head-hunting, taken purely as sport, comes first. There is plenty of good food to be had about these rivers—fish, fowl and sago for the taking, apart from bananas and pumpkins grown in food gardens—so that cannibalism, in all probability, is more a luxury than a necessity.

"This feofle he eat fig, wallaby, cassawy," volunteered the old sergeant. "Flenty kai-kai (food). Flenty pish he stop along river, this man he catchem pish all the time."

It has been said—probably with truth—that Papua possesses many unknown fruits, now wild and bitter, which could with cultivation be trained into new and valuable

additions to our gardens. Certainly some of those one saw on the Strickland looked very suitable for the process of training.

But, in the interior of Papua, one is always more or less in a hurry. No one can go alone; a fairly large party is necessarv for purposes of protection. That party must be fed, and it cannot be fed off the country, even where food is available, since no prudent traveller trusts, or depends on, the wild tribes of the interior. Therefore the length of the trip is always conditioned by food supply and difficulties of transport. On the rivers, where carriage is easy, the perils of rising and falling water, shoals, snags and rapids, forbid anything like lingering. It is fatally easy to lose your boat up a Papuan river; and the loss of your boat means the loss of everything: not excluding life. . . .

Which explains a good many things; among others, the neglect of botanical

study.

About five o'clock the police, who were up in the bow, raised an excited cheer, and began pointing and waving towards the left bank. Canoes were gliding timidly through the low brush that overhung the water's edge; one or two hovered at the mouth of a tributary creek, and, terrified,



A NATIVE OF LOWER FLY.

drew back. "Sambio, Sambio!" yelled

the police, waving their arms.
"Sambio," the cry of greeting used on the upper Fly, was first noticed more than thirty years ago by Sir William Mac-Gregor; but no one, so far, knows exactly what it means. It appears, however, to be an "Open Sesame" of some kind, and the few white people who have been up the Fly have all used it freely for the purpose of making friends. The word, it seemed, had not lost its magic, for when they heard us, out crept the timid canoes, making, for all their timidity, wonderful time against the fierce current, and almost catching up the powerful launch. The people in them were strange and wild beyond description: unclothed save for an ornament or two, with long artificial hair knotted into their own and hanging down their backs below the hips; they carried huge bows and sixfoot, painted arrows, capable of going through a plank and of spitting a man like a sparrow. Most of them kept their bows in their hands, ready for use if wanted. One could not help admiring their pluck in venturing forth at all. They knew scarcely anything of white people, and those whom they had previously seen had travelled in comparatively small launches.

The hundred-and-eighty-ton Laurabada must have looked as huge, to them, as the last and biggest Atlantic liner looks to a fishing boat of Gobh. But they did their very best to catch her up, shouting unintelligible things which, one guessed, were meant for "Hold on; we want to visit you; you're going too fast."

A sight that amazed and excited the police extremely was something never seen on the Strickland before; something that peered timidly out of the forest, and retreated, coming back to gaze again—a woman. Probably the sight of myself on the bow of the boat had brought her out. It is certain that no Government official-and these include almost every visitor of the few who have been to Lake Murray—had previously seen the women of the district; in accordance with native custom, they had been kept carefully concealed. woman in the canoe was rather personable looking; young, well fed, and oddly dressed, in a complete frock of bark. This usually marks the status of widow; but there are some odd forms of "weeds" on the Fly, and one could not be certain. Once, on the middle Fly, a trader saw and photographed a widow who was entirely nude,

save for a heavy netted veil covering her head and face! This widow, if she was one, wore no veil, only a piece of bark cloth on her head and the neat little bark frock. She was, unluckily, too far away and too much in the shade for a photograph.

After this excitement things quieted down and we ran the rest of the day without event. At night we anchored in a wide elbow of the river, surrounded by high forest. No tongue could tell the glory of the sunset on the splendid stream; the exquisite nameless greens of reeds and cane and tall bamboo; and no words known to any human language could express the strange, drugging peace that coiled about one's mind, fascinating, hypnotising, winding the spell of the wild places ever closer and closer.

In the morning it was very bright, and everything that was not blue was green, and everything that was not either was gold. And as we went along, faster now, because we were in the Herbert River, and the current was growing less strong, we saw new beauties every minute; new vistas of what seemed like the loveliest of green meadows, set with groves of graceful foliage; bright lawns running down from ramparts of forest; sometimes a view of distant spreading fields that seemed all ready for the plough, fair, quiet, civilised. . .

It was all a mirage. The meadows, the lawns, the fields, were nothing but marsh; and sometimes, water covered with long deceptive grass. Scarcely a marsh fowl could run on them without sinking in. For unknown miles and miles this country continued. Natives knew the way about it; natives could pass, in their gliding canoes cut out of a single log; natives, it was supposed, had their fastnesses and fortresses hidden away here and there, but white people had never been away from the rivers, and for the present were not likely to go.

Towards the middle of the day—the third day since leaving Madiri plantation—the river began to widen out all round us; the forests thinned and finally disappeared. Everywhere the Herbert now ran through low meadows of extraordinarily brilliant green grass—false meadows, like the others, for they were in truth nothing but swamps. By and by we were met by a great concourse of white, flying, screaming birds, some middle-sized, some so large that one looked at them a second time before crediting one's eyes. They perched on lone trees in flocks, they rose together, speckling all the sky;



HEAD-HUNTERS WITH DRUM.

they shrieked and quacked and called. And we knew that we were in the middle of Lake Murray's famous flocks of wild ducks and wild geese, and that Lake Murray itself was close at hand.

A little farther, the marshes opened out, grew paler and more watery, and at the last were water and nothing but water: blue water, stretching far away, with bright green islands standing up out of it, and darker forests hemming it in. A long way away the far side of the lake was visible, just a pale purple streak. The ends we could not see. Lake Murray is twenty-six miles long, and varies from three or four to six or seven miles wide. At least that is the official statement. But I cannot altogether square it with the fact that later in the day we went seven miles straight out to a village on-an island, which island was certainly four or more miles away from the opposite shore.

The Laurabada, conned with care, was slowly run into the opening of the lake. She was taking risks; but journeys through the interior of Papua cannot be separated from risk, and nobody troubles much over one more or one less. The lead kept going; the engineer "stood by," and we crept carefully out into the Lake—a place of fairy loveliness, had one had time or leisure to look at it. But that was just what one had not. Canoes were gathering about the boat; not very many, but well filled with interested and excited natives, who paddled swiftly round and round, expressing their

amazement by cries. No such tremendous ship as this hundred-and-eighty-tonner had ever entered into their imaginations. They were not the least afraid of her, or of us; the Lake Murray man is far too full of what our American brothers call "pep" and "bounce" for that. They were only very curious, and especially anxious to get a look at the remarkable phenomenon on the cabin deck; the thing that wore those clothes, and spoke in a queer voice, not like a man's; that was apparently a white woman—a creature they had not seen, and probably scarce believed in. All of them



YOUNG HEAD-HUNTER WITH FEATHERED HEADDRESS
AND TOBACCO PIPE.

had come well provided with weapons, just in case. . . . They had also come provided with curios and oddments for sale. Good trade had come out of previous visits, and the Lake Murray native never neglects a chance of bettering himself. It is true that he has tried to murder his visitors quite as often as not; but in all probability he had what he considered good reasons—desire to obtain trade stuff in bulk, instead of small tantalising instalments; desire to secure really unique heads for his collection; simple desire to make a row—"or any other old reason why."

To-day he seemed peaceably inclined; nobody drew a bow on anybody, and nobody in consequence felt obliged to make threatening motions with rifles. There has never been any irreparable trouble with these people; but it must be said that tact and care on one side had had more to do with this happy result than peaceful spirit on the other.

They brought paddles for sale, curiously carved and painted; beautiful chains of feathers, meant to tie about the head; dancing clubs, ornamented with red and grey berries, feathers, and seeds, and carved in open-work; arrows, every one a work of art; fly switches made of white duck feathers, and most artistically finished; also, human heads and human jaws.

Fly River preserved heads are famous all over New Guinea, and the natives of Lake Murray are perhaps the ablest exponents of the art to be found in any part of the Fly River system.

The heads that they brought in their canoes, and exhibited with touching pride, were probably those of enemies. It is supposed that they also preserve the heads of friends and relatives, but these, naturally, are not offered for sale. The Lake Murray taxidermist, in possession of a suitable corpse, removes the head, at the same time stripping off a large part of the skin of neck and shoulders. He opens the scalp at the back, removes the bones of the head, and smokes and cures the scalp, converting it into thick soft leather. This he stuffs out into an extraordinary shape, half human, half animal, lacing up the split at the back, and the base of the neck, with strips of cured skin that are exactly like porpoise-hide bootlaces. After stuffing, it is painted all over, black ornamented with white and red; the nose is elevated by means of a piece of bamboo, and the open mouth filled with white stones to represent teeth. Long locks of fibre, representing hair, are fastened on; sometimes feathers are added. It is impossible to deny the cleverness and—in a sense—the artistic merit of the work. Those heads are their especial treasures, and the fact that they brought some out for sale suggested they were very badly off for "trade" stuff. In truth, we did not see a knife, a bead, a scrap of iron, an inch of cloth, among the whole tribe, save those that we brought One four-shilling knife—one ourselves. head, was the standard price; and we could probably have bought every available head



STUFFED HUMAN HEAD AND CLUB.

on the lakes on those terms—live or dead.

These people, although at war with almost all the other tribes, and exceedingly shy and wild, manage to do a little trading with natives who live farther down the river, as witness their possession of certain ocean shells, used for ornament and clothing. It seems strange, in view of this fact, that they cannot obtain knives, which one would suppose to be the first essential of the headhunter's existence. Knives of bamboo and shell, however, are all that they commonly possess. Their daggers, like nearly all native daggers, are made of human or cassowary bone, and the very long, sharp, and effective points of their great arrows are also bone in many cases.

Up to the present no verbal communication with the Lake Murray folk has been found possible.

Their language is peculiar, unlike that of other tribes who are known and more or less civilised. Government officials are now at work collecting words from neighbouring tribes, which may be used as a basis for a vocabulary in time. But on the occasion of our visit no talk was possible; the overworked "Sambio!" was all that anyone on either side could understand.

Wild, shy birds as they are, they

are exceedingly courageous. The lakes are so large that only a very few natives sighted the *Laurabada* as she nosed cautiously in. These few, however, did not seem afraid of the great ship—very great to them—and appeared only anxious to see as much of her as possible. They hovered all round us, poising and darting in their mobile canoes like water-flies; they held up heads, and offered paddles and arrows, shouting unintelligible talk. . . .

In the meantime the leadsman kept imperturbably calling: "And a-half-two! Mark two! Mark two! Quarter less two! Mark two!" which, as we drew ten feet, gave one to think a little. Our navigating officer, cigar in hand, was conversing lightly with a higher dignitary, keeping all the while one ear open for the leadsman.

"I think I'll take her back a bit," he said.

("Quarter less two!" interjected the leadsman. This gave us just six inches clearance; but a miss is as good as a mile.)

"Because a lake like this is always liable to sudden rises and falls; it might go down a foot or two in the night, and then we'd be aground."

"And that," observed the higher official calmly, "would be a silly sort of way to end our lives."

"Quite, sir." He drew on his cigar a little. "I think of running her over there into about three fathoms."

("Mark two," said the leadsman.)

We ran back into three fathoms, and anchored there. A small launch was slung out, and we three whites, with a native engineer and four police, set out to look for villages, there being no one in sight. We took a camera, some afternoon tea, and



STUFFED HUMAN HEAD AND ARROWS.

plenty of cartridges done up in neat packets. Two of the police stood up on the bow, looking extremely picturesque in their dark blue and scarlet tunics and jumpers and armed with rifles and bandoliers. These living figure-heads had to con the launch, since nobody knows much about the depths and shoals of the lake, and what is known cannot be relied upon.

The Lake Murray native is not easy to find. We had to run for seven miles before seeing a sign of one. Possibly villages were hidden at different points we passed; these lake dwellers always keep a few retreats ready. in case of sudden raiding. But the first visible sign of life, other than the few canoes that had visited the Laurabada, was a tiny, picturesque collection of brown huts, perched on the very summit of a small high island. This we made for at top speed, somebody having remembered that it had, after all, been visited before. On the first occasion the villagers had tried to shoot the Lieutenant-Governor, and a massacre was averted only by tact and nerve on the part of the whites. The second call was peaceful. This was the third call; and the chance of peace was therefore about fifty-fifty; but nobody worried.

When we came within hail of the village, it began to look much as an ants' nest looks after a stick has been poked into it. The head-hunters were running all over the place, up and down the hill, in and out of the houses; some of them were dancing

—others rushed into the shallow water up to their shoulders, and frantically waved arms. Still nearer we ran, trying to find a place where the little launch could be safely manœuvred through the water-weeds without fouling her propeller; and now it was clear that the island was giving us, if anything, too enthusiastic a welcome. I say too enthusiastic, for a reason that will be explained later; South Sea travellers will guess it without being told.

They rushed forward to greet the launch as we ran in; they brought their canoes along to help us through the mud. Most of them were yelling, and all who could find any firm foothold were dancing. were an extremely fine-looking lot of people, naked, much decorated with shells, teeth, and feathers; wearing incredibly long artificial hair down their backs in a tail so closely interwoven with their own that it was impossible to tell where the false began. Some of them carried bows and arrows, but most were empty-handed. One man, who danced backward before the party as it ascended the hill, had a human head tucked under his arm; it remained entirely unexplained, then or thereafter. I incline to think myself that he was busy decorating it, and just happened to bring it along, as a housewife might happen to bring her crochet in her hand when running out to look at a passing circus or procession.

It became apparent, as we went up the hill, that the villagers were pleased with



ELDER MEN.



APPROACHING THE VILLAGE-EXCITED HEAD-HUNTERS.

our call—on the whole—and they were especially intrigued by the sight of that strange and unheard-of beast, a white woman. The police had to interfere once or twice, to prevent rude crowding. All round the enterprising head-hunters came, staring, touching, poking, yelling with excitement when they noted that my skin was lighter than a man's, asking by signs for gifts of knives and cloth, peering curiously at the hair coiled under my hat. They asked a hundred questions about me-which no one understood—and volunteered a great deal of information—which informed nobody. Old Sergeant Simoi succeeded in explaining to them by signs that I wanted to see their women, and after some parley, they despatched a messenger to "parts unknown."

As is well known, savage tribes hide their women away from danger, and usually—though not invariably—order them to keep out of sight when there is fighting. The presence of women is not a safeguard, but their absence is always a bad sign. No women, so far, had shown up.

The houses of these people appeared to be very poor. They were mere sheds of sago, roughly built. Across one rather large house ran a partition like a low cattle fence, dividing the men's quarters from the women's. Weapons and heads were hung up somewhat casually. There was nothing like the elaborate architecture known on the coasts and on the lower Fly. Here, the people are too nomadic to undertake the work of heavy building. Their constructive abilities seem to find expression

in feather work, carving, and especially the decorating of heads—all of which arts they carry to remarkable perfection, considering the absence of decent materials and tools. A true artist is the Lake Murray head-hunter; be it canoe-paddle, arrow, club, or head, his hand adorns whatever it touches, and his sense of form and colour is impeccable.

We bought a few curios, showing as little as possible of the trade stuff we carried. We did not buy everything that was offered, however, since much of it was mere rubbish. The people were greedy for knives and cloth; they kept on pressing their wares by signs, but we took no notice.

Then came a diversion. Not very far off there was a low, beautiful island, darkly wooded, surrounded by emerald green marsh-grass, and set brilliantly between the turquoise of the still broad lake and the milky blue of the sky. From this, small black canoes like little water-flies began to creep; they came, accompanied by a sound of sobbing and wailing, and within them, as they came slowly nearer, were to be seen small stooping bodies. It was the women of the village, who had been sent for and told to come out; they were obeying their lords, but it was clear they did so with reluctance.

So far as I know, the women of the lakes had not been seen by any previous party of the very few parties who have visited Lake Murray. I can at all events answer for it that none of the Government people had seen them, and Government officials

comprise almost all who have been to the place. The conduct of the women certainly suggested that they had not previously met white people. They hung about in the marsh at the foot of the hill, refusing to go any further, and could not be induced to land until I went down and showed Then they came, but reluctantly. myself. hiding their faces, and still wailing. Even the gifts of red cloth which I offered them did not reassure them; they looked at me as if I were some wild and terrible animal, and when I tried to speak to any of them, they turned to their husbands and clung to them for protection, hiding on the shoulders of the men. And it is well worth noting that the men treated them kindly, laughing at them as a husband will laugh at his wife's

now; and the men showed us the interior of the very rough, plain, sago-built house that seemed to be the chief house of the village; and the women came in and took their place behind the partition that marked off the women's quarters. I put a white singlet on one of them, to the accompaniment of wild yells from half the tribethe woman herself seemed entirely indifferent. I also offered her a small lookingglass, holding it before her face, but neither she nor the other women seemed to have any idea of what it was; plainly, they had never seen such a thing before. All the same, I left it with them, being reasonably confident that feminine vanity would show the way to its use before very long.

It was a rather barren visit, on the whole.



WOMEN OF THE VILLAGE

little feminine vagaries, but assuring them (so far as one could judge) that it was all right; nothing to be afraid of. . . . head-hunters of Lake Murray are murderous and bloodthirsty savages—granted; but it seems that they know how to treat their women better than many of the peaceable tribes of the coast. These brown girls were plump and good-looking, for the most part; they bore no signs of the ceaseless toil that wears out the women of the coastal districts, and turns them to uglv hags while yet in their twenties; they are clearly well fed, and they seemed-if one may judge by the small, significant incident mentioned above-to have more confidence in and liking for their men than most Papuan women.

We all went up to the top of the island

Until a vocabulary of the Lake Murray language is compiled, little can be done with the people, beyond the cultivation of general goodwill—a difficult matter with so excitable and treacherous a folk.

It was not as peaceful as it seemed. Having had some experience of head-hunting peoples, who are usually the finest and most interesting tribes of their respective districts, but always nervy and uncertain in conduct, I had already noticed a general "boiling up" in process, and realised that it might very well result in boiling over. The men had not had all the goods they wanted from us; they must have known we carried a store in the small launch, and that to cut us off in the village would probably mean the acquirement of a good deal of loot, not to speak of a few really

valuable heads. They were all continually dancing now, all yelling, not after the wild-dog fashion that had greeted our arrival, but in a concerted, college-yell sort of way that suggested a definite object. In fact, they were working themselves up; and when a cannibal and head-hunting tribe starts that process there is only one end to it.

"I think," mildly suggested the leader of the party, "that perhaps our welcome is wearing rather thin. We may as well be

getting back again."

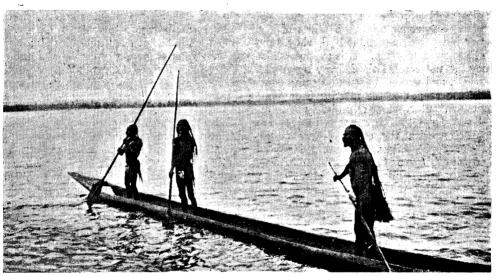
And it was so.

We went down to the launch with our four police, escorted by a good many scores of over-excited savages. And we got in, and got away. And they did not trouble us.

floating helpless on Lake Murray, and that riches might be rapidly acquired—because most of the canoes on the lake were away making a Cook's excursion round about the big *Laurabada*. So, a second time, the thing which might have happened did not happen, and a good story was spoiled.

The subject of raiders was not even mentioned by the Government officials. Until the engine got going again, they read the last from Mudie's, smoked, and looked at the scenery. Why worry?

Impossible to believe that battle, murder and sudden death hide everywhere among these lovely islets, emeralds set upon a sapphire shield; that headless, flayed bodies may be found floating among the silver-



LAKE MURRAY HEAD-HUNTERS IN CANOE.

It is a flat ending to a story, but all endings to such stories are flat, because when they are not there is nobody to tell about them.

When we were four miles or so from the village, out of sight behind another island, the engine did what launch engines usually do-stopped. The native engineer twisted its tail and hit it over the head, and by-andby it went again, and by-and-by it stopped again. We lay for certain half-hours motionless on the burning blue water, and for certain other half-hours crept, as wounded duck might creep, through the marshes of Lake Murray towards our distant nest the Laurabada. The village we had left did not see us, because we were not in their line of sight when the breakdown occurred. Nor did it occur to any roving body of raiders that there was a lot of treasure

green weeds where waterfowl perch and nest; that a column of blue smoke, most peaceful and homelike of sights, rising up among trees, may show the place of no domestic hearth, but of a hideous smokehouse where severed, dripping heads are taken to dry.

For the present it is unlikely that mission work will be attempted on the lakes. The establishment of a missionary station would mean that the Government must also plant a station there, with native police and a white magistrate, at enormous expense—since no missionary party would live for a week, if abandoned on the lakes without protection. The slaughter of such a party would mean just what every one is anxious to avoid—a punitive expedition, closing the lakes to friendly advance mayhap for genera-

tions. Later on, no doubt, missionaries will come, and with the Government to help them will do good work.

As soon as the language is understood, and interpreters found, it is intended to take away one or two of the young men for training as native police, and probably a boy child, simply for petting and spoiling, so that he can be returned to the lakes with a thoroughly good impression of the white people, intended "strictly for publication." To take anyone away without explaining would simply mean the ambush and murder of the next white visitors, as "pay-back." Gradually, in this manner, the head-

Gradually, in this manner, the headhunters will be lured into touch with the ruling race; tamed, taught, and civilised, as far as may be good for them. They are a people brimful of energy and go, most unlike the gloomy apathetic tribes of the lower Fly—with whom, indeed, they seem to have no connection. It is supposed that they did not reach Lake Murray by way of the Fly, and in long-past times came down over the ranges of the interior from some unknown outer source; probably Malaya.

unknown outer source; probably Malaya. Some have supposed these natives are connected with the extraordinary people of the Sepik River, in the "Mandated Territory" (once German New Guinea), who came overland to the middle Sepik a very few hundred years ago from some part of Malaya and succeeded before long in dominating all that part of the country. Certainly the clever, warlike, cruel, artistic people of Lake Murray suggest recollections of the middle Sepik to anyone who has visited it. So far as I know, no one but myself has seen both places.

Returning to the *Laurabada*, we found her the centre of a small fleet of canoes, filled with lake people who were very anxious to do a little trading. More heads were offered for sale, and quite a number of human jaws, beautifully cured and preserved, coloured a dark red, and hung locket-wise on pieces of native string. or two of the natives had managed to get on to the Laurabada, although this was against orders: and they were still there when we came back, making the best of their time by exploring her all over. big hearty warrior, in no clothes and a handful of plumes, seemed to have jumped to the conclusion that my cabin was worth raiding because I had taken trade goods from it.

While I was out on deck, he made one of those sudden dashes that only the naked muscular savage can make, and had all

but got into the cabin before a policeman and a sailor saw him, and together dragged him away. After this they were all turned off the deck, and requested to rejoin their canoes. Since no one had missed anything we gave the Lake Murray people a good mark for honesty; but the mark had to be cancelled later on when the Lieutenant-Governor discovered that certain of the savages had penetrated into his private sanctum, stolen a pair of trousers, a coat, and—amazing choice!—a History of Ireland in Gaelic! What they wanted with the last remains one of the many mysteries of Lake Murray.

I do not know how long the canoes would have stayed about the ship had not Nature taken a hand in the scene and hustled them off the stage. One of the sudden, fierce lake storms began to threaten, with purple clouds and stabbing lightning flashes; and in almost no time every canoe was away. The burst of speed they put up, paddling across the big open space in which we were moored, towards the shelter of the far-off islands, was something worth seeing.

These light, hollow log canoes of Lake Murray, as smooth as shells, are exceedingly difficult for a stranger to stand in, even to sit in; they require to be balanced like a bicycle, and have almost no hold on the But these very peculiarities make them fast almost as a launch, when a team of muscular, naked head-hunters, with bent knees and swaying bodies, one with the canoe as a rider is one with his horse, urge it furiously across the lake with the long, wide-bladed paddles peculiar to the district. I should not like to be a helpless stranger, strayed from some distant village into the lovely Herbert River, if one of these canoes came whooping up from the lakes, manned by lakemen on the look-out for heads.

We lay at anchor all night, and nobody came near us. Once or twice during the night, when I awoke and heard the sound of water lapping rapidly, I wondered whether it was wind, or an assault of canoes. might have been one or the other. things turned out, it was wind. early, and started away down-river at a cracking pace; never assuredly had the waters of the Herbert, the Strickland, and the Fly parted before the keel of anything going along at thirteen knots an hour, which was our pace with the aid of the rivercurrents. The journey down was eventless with one exception—the meeting with that strange and terrible thing, a river-bore.

The bore of the Fly is notorious, and small wonder! When a river possesses a trumpet-shaped estuary, narrowing rapidly from eighty miles up to one or two; when it sends down, every day, water enough to make liberal provision for the needs of every inhabitant of earth; and meets, with that flood of water, the flood of ocean tides swept resistlessly up the trumpet, it is easy to understand that some local disturbance will naturally take place at the meeting-point. There is always something of a bore in the Fly at high tide; but at spring tides it becomes most formidable, and every creature living on the lower river fears it. The bore is the victory of the sea over the river: when it sweeps up, the Fly (or any similar stream) driving back, for a while, the river

All the whites were "on top" in half a minute, looking with glasses across the huge space of the lower river at a thin white line advancing with amazing rapidity from the far-off sea. The bore came on as fast as a galloping horse; whether one could hear the ugly roar or not from the safe distance that we kept—half a mile off, in deep water-I cannot say, but some of us fancied we did. It was not in the least like a sea-wave; it came on fiercely, tossing its head in a peculiar, angry fashion, somewhat like a very vicious horse. Small wonder the natives personify it, and fear its approach above any of the dangers of this most dangerous river.

With our powerful engines, and plenty of sea room, we had nothing to fear, but



VIEW OF THE ISLAND -HUNTERS IN CANOES,

water, it makes a terrace right across from bank to bank, from three to eight or nine feet higher than the level in front of it. Anything confronting this, or overtaken by it, will probably be thrown end for end. tumbled over and smashed.

Particularly is this the case if the bore is met in shallow water, where it is at its worst. Countless canoes have been caught by the bore and destroyed; and not a few whale boats, staunch thirty-foot clipperbuilt little vessels, manned by trained men, have met with disaster. I had been anxious to see this celebrated monster, but did not know there was a chance until someone roused me from a lounge and a novel with the call, "Come up on the bridge: the bore's coming."

I was told that even the *Laurabada*, if caught unawares on a shoal, would be stripped of every deckhouse and probably stove in.

Photographs taken at a distance and in dark weather give but a poor view of the bore. I doubt if a good view has ever been taken. Anyone at close quarters with it would have small time or attention to give to photographing.

We anchored in the lower estuary. The Fly took one more "lick" at us before we left; for the holding ground was bad, and the ship dragged all of five miles, and it was more good luck than anything else that found us safely afloat next morning. She is a wicked river, but a beautiful river, and wonderful beyond telling!



THE MOTORIST'S COURTSHIP!



A TRIFLING TRANSPOSITION.

"Oh! what a dear little hat."
"What a little dear hat, you mean."



NOT AMBIDEXTROUS.

FOREMAN PAINTER: Slow, ain't yer? New Hand: Well, I can only use one 'and at a time-I ain't aspidistras!



A DOUBTFUL RECOMMENDATION.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Is the beef tender?"
"Tender, lady—tender as a 'usband's love,"
"Oh, well—have you any mutton?"

## SPOTTED DOG

## By B. L. JACOT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

"HE point is, Lady Hesperia," St.
Leger was arguing as I entered
the room, "whereas it is impossible to alter the date of a point-to-point
meeting at the last moment, the postponement of a charity bazaar is a matter of no
rare occurrence. Now, if I were to——"
"Take a seat, Herbert," my Aunt inter-

"Take a seat, Herbert," my Aunt interrupted, turning from the argument to deal with me over her shoulder. "Charity bazaars organised by me are never postponed," she went on to inform St. Leger. "Was there anything else you wished to say?"

Whether George Frederick St. Leger, Viscount Leamington, was a fit companion for a young man who has yet to make his mark in the world was a family question that had long been settled in my Aunt's mind in the uncompromising negative. The man had far too much money, and, in spite of the best advice, was inclined to stick to his own ideas as to the most suitable way of getting rid of it. Obviously, a citizen who would never be one of the world's workers. She turned from him now as one might turn from the decayed remains of a misshapen worm.

"I sent for you at this early hour, Herbert," she told me, "in the hope that you might be able to assist me in a matter of some moment."

"My dear Aunt——" I began readily, but the discredited comrade of my youth was still on the trail.

"This bazaar affair is to last for a week—that is, seven days," he insisted. "Your niece is not compelled to open the wassail on the first day. Fay may be the daughter of a Cabinet Minister, but let us be reasonable. Come, come! If the girl has already arranged with me to come out to the meeting—"

ing——"
"Beauty Boy," my Aunt went on to inform me, "has been stolen. At eight-fifteen this morning he was nowhere to be found. . . ." It was clear that, in her consciousness, St. Leger had ceased to exist.

"Stolen?" I echoed. "Your spotted samovede?"

"Fay arranged—subject, of course, to your confirmation—to run out with me to the meeting some time ago. It's impossible to postpone the point-to-point," insisted St. Leger. "What I mean is, Lady Hesperia, it has taken me months to get that girl to consent to be seen in public with me. If I——"

"When his food was taken down to him this morning," the spinster whose heart is in her dogs interrupted, with a dangerous calm. —" when his food was taken down, he was nowhere to be found. The police and so forth have been informed. My hope is that he may merely have strayed. What I wish you to do is to search the vicinity. There is no need for me to tell you that the dog is unique. His spots represent the crowning success of years of careful breeding—Beauty Boy is the first spotted samoyede: even his father was born plain-white as the original stock." A warm glow of pride softened her voice. "The dog is, of course, worth a very large sum of money, but, if he has been stolen, the thief will have no little difficulty in disposing of him. He is well known—

A cough like the rasp of a buzz-saw finding a nail tore the air. St. Leger, it was clear, had no time for this sort of drivel.

"We'll take it, then, that your niece has your permission, Lady Hesperia, to give the first day a miss?"

The breeder of the only spotted samoyede turned a baleful lorgnette over the elegant length of the interrupter.

"We will not," she said simply. "Neither will I discuss the matter while I have matters of importance to attend to."

A noise like the opening of a bottle of sodawater followed the statement—a symbol of finality that has been known to stop even an eloquent taxi-driver in the middle of a word.

I rose to my feet. My call was clarion clear. Not only do I have to look to this leading citizen for spiritual guidance here below, but I also have to glance in her austere

direction, roughly once a month, on more material matters.

"Leave it to me, my dear Aunt," I said. "Leave it to me."

As I trod the pavements of Charles Street. outside, I found St. Leger at my side. Something, it seemed, had brought swift sunshine to his life to brighten the gloom of his failure with my Aunt. The poor fellow, I knew, was partial to a sigh in the presence of my cousin, or her photograph, but after a dose of Aunt Hesperia I hardly expected a care-free manifestation of joie de vivre.

"That girl-" he began, but I soon put a stop to that sort of thing. There was

sterner work afoot.

"This dog," I corrected.

The companion of my youth smiled in his

superior way.

"Exactly!" he agreed. "That is my point. That girl—this dog. The connection wouldn't have reached you yet. That Family Disease of yours evidently thinks at the moment that she's going to ruin my day with Fay. It's taken me nearly three weeks to get that girl-"

"Shall I be seeing you later, some time?"

I inquired.

"One minute!" He stopped me on the kerb. "Providence thought fit to remove that prize dog of your Aunt's this morning. Don't you see? Did you hear her say she wouldn't talk about the point-to-point until the dog had been found? It would be criminal to waste it. The only human touch about that old wart is her dogs. The only way to get at her is through something that wags a tail. Except for that chink, she's solid concrete. And now she's lost her favourite pup!"

" Well ?"

"Leave it to me, dear boy! Go and sit down at the Club. I'll give you a ring in an hour or so when I've got the brute on a bit of

string-

- "I am going," I told him firmly, "to see B. Tuke. If anyone is going to find that dog, that hero is to be me. Who was it who was sent for in the hour of urgent need?" I turned my steps resolutely down to Shepherd's Market, but St. Leger followed me.
- "Have a heart, Bertie," he pleaded, but I fixed my eye stonily on the broad
- "It's a gift-can't you see?" he urged. "Beauty Boy, the Spotted Dog: leading

him back to the old wicker basket on an end of rope. The door flings open: the dog leaps forward to lick his mistress's face: I smother a sob: she clasps my hand.... Why, she'd be ready to do anything I asked!"

"Without a doubt," I hastened.

"'Take the girl to the point-to-point, dear boy,' she'd say, 'and let anyone open that perishing bazaar!""

"Couldn't very well say anything else."
"That's great, then," he enthused.
"Thank you, dear boy! Always the man to lean on in an emergency!" He patted me affectionately on the shoulder.

"There is only one flaw in it," I men-

"Oh?" His tone was one of courteous tolerance.

"The hand on the end of the bit of rope," I said, "will be mine. Still-if you care to come round with me . . ."

For some moments we walked in silence. then: "Very well," summed up St. Leger. "We shall see."

We met B. Tuke outside his customary habitat, the "Leathern Bottel," in the heart of the Market. It seemed he was expecting

"Good morning, my lord. Good morning, sir," he greeted, and unveiled his billiard ball with a deferential lifting of his grey bowler. "I expect you're looking for a dog," he went on with a knowing wink. He made it clear that there is precious little that gets past B. Tuke.

St. Leger cleared his throat, but I got in

"I am looking for a spotted samoyede," I said. "The property of Lady Hesperia Hythe."

To some the name, B. Tuke, may be a distant whisper, nothing more; but to those who have come into contact with this social asset the name is nothing less than a beacon and a bugle-call. Let us say, for instance, that you happen to be in some doubt as to a safe repository for your shirt. Can this little man in the grey bowler whisper the name of the horse that will bring it home for you? Just ask the Metropolitan Police. Then what about the man who will pay absolutely the highest prices for gents' discarded wardrobes? Is he a friend of B. Tuke—not merely an acquaintance by way of business, but a personal friend who is always ready to do him a special favour? Try B. Tuke with that dress-suit which got involved in the accident. That will show you. Who is the man who can supply you at a moment's notice with a bag of live rats to try out your terriers in Hyde Park? Who is the courier

briefly. "I've got the dog round the back here."

Although I am not on intimate terms with my Aunt's kennel, I had little difficulty



ready to run with a note to any stage-door in the Metropolitan area, to turn it over for prompt delivery to those stern custodians of the portal who are his personal friends? Who knows a philanthropist with anything from £5 to £50,000, ready and waiting to be given away to anyone over twenty-one? B. Tuke is the name.

It was this man I sought in my hour of need. Nor did he let me down.

"Come along with me, sir," he begged

in recognising Beauty Boy, hitched up to a post in the yard at the back of the inn. The prize samoyede would have been a difficult dog to miss. One had only to look for the spots. At the sight of B. Tuke, the animal's eye lit up with joy. His tail swept the cobbles of the yard and he sent up a welcome to the heavens which shook the window-panes in their frames. From bow-sprit to stern-post, this incredible dog was dappled with violent splashes, red-brown against

the snow-white of his fleece—a shower of red-ripe gooseberries shot into a virgin snow-drift.

"Been washing him?" inquired St. Leger.

"The animal has been in the habit for some weeks, sir," B. Tuke informed me, "of visiting us in the Market." He ignored St. Leger in favour of the man with the probable reward. "Her ladyship's butler, you will recollect, was presented with the dog's father some months ago? This dog's father lives

I could not quite see the drift. "Well?" I asked.

"My friend who found the dog," the little man went on easily, "wishes it to be made quite clear—"

"Never mind," interrupted St. Leger, "how you managed to get hold of the brute. Here he is, and that's that. Just slip a bit of rope on his collar for me, will you?"

"You found the dog," I hastened to put



"'Get me that lead and it's £30,' chipped in St. Leger. 'This dog is my affair.'"

in the Market, too. The two animals, sir, have been in the habit of meeting: they are fond of a bit of fish——"

in. "Your trouble shall be rewarded. If a ten-pound note—"

"Nice dog," murmured the social asset

absently. "Worth a great deal of money, so they say—"

It was obvious that the sound of a tenner

had passed him by.

"To me that dog's worth twenty—"St.

Leger began.

"I have been commissioned to recover the dog," I put in hurriedly, "and I am prepared to go to £25—not a penny more."

"Get me that lead and it's £30," chipped in St. Leger. "This dog is my affair."

"Will it be——?" hesitated the dog-finder, but St. Leger was quick to assure him.

"Cash," he snapped. "Come along,

man! Where's that lead?"

B. Tuke eyed me expectantly, but I would have nothing further to do with the affair. With a man who owns half Scotland to bid against an auction loses its point.

The little man fetched a lead and passed

the animal over to St. Leger.

"I will hand the notes over to the man who found the dog," he informed the comrade of my youth as he took leave of us. "I am acting on his behalf. He found the dog, which I understand is the animal you were seeking——"

"What a quick grasp you have of these things!" In his mind's eye St. Leger saw himself at the races with Fay Chellinghame. With the samoyede on the end of the leash, the world for him had a pinkish tinge.

B. Tuke folded the notes away in his

pocket.

"Yes, my lord," he answered simply, and, unveiling the billiard ball once more, was gone.

It was a pretty tribute to the man whose pleasure it is to make himself indispensable that neither St. Leger nor I was at all surprised that he should have had the dog ready, like his rats, at a moment's notice. Beauty Boy, he had explained, was in the habit of frequenting the Market: the rest seemed simple enough. Not until we reached the house in Charles Street once more, however, did we discover how truly simple it all was.

Many are the things I might have said to St. Leger with reference to the auction whereat B. Tuke handled the hammer. In my wisdom, arising out of long experience, I left them unsaid; and I was glad, out of the softness of my heart, that I had done so when he was shown in on my indomitable Aunt with the dog at the end of the leash.

"Lady Hesperia," he announced with a flourish, "I have brought you back your

dog. From the moment I first heard of your grave loss, I wasted no time. I scoured London. I searched the neighbourhood. I count myself fortunate that——" He broke off sharply. "I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing," apologised my Aunt. At first sight of the dog, she had stiffened like a ramrod as she sat. Now she seemed amused.

"Bertie, here," St. Leger went on generously, "did his best, no doubt. He was with me, too." He cleared his throat. "Working westwards from the neighbourhood of the——"

"Don't let the dog roll on the rugs," Lady Hesperia interrupted urgently. "I don't think his spots can have had time to dry properly——"

St. Leger jerked at the leash. An idea seemed to have struck him. "Spots?" he echoed at length. His voice had an un-

easy quaver.

"Haven't you noticed them?" Aunt Hesperia inquired with an ominous inflexion of sweetness. "Did you paint them yourself? Or did you get someone else to do them for you?"

"I will say this for him, Aunt," I put in quickly, "he didn't paint them himself.

They are done far too well . . ."

"I forgot that," this leading citizen breathed gratefully. "Whoever did it, though, was nothing if not generous. I can't say that it improves poor Roarer's appearance, though——"

"Roarer?" echoed St. Leger.

"Yes. We always called him that. Short for Aurora Borealis, you know. He's Beauty Boy's sire. My butler keeps him now, down in Shepherd's Market. I suppose you must have your joke, now and then, Lord Leamington, but this is twice you've called to-day. Before luncheon, too!"

St. Leger swallowed.

"Do you mean to say—" he began huskily, but my Aunt cut him short.

"Beauty Boy was discovered by my butler some twenty minutes ago. It appears he had been playing with his father—that animal you have decorated so amusingly—in the Market. The animal at present is tied up to the railings in the area, waiting to be washed. Are you remaining to luncheon, Herbert?"

"If I may, Aunt," I begged. "I dropped in on the chance."

"Good morning, Lord Leamington."

For a long moment St. Leger contemplated his cosmos in silence.

"Good morning, Lady Hesperia," he returned at length. "Don't bother! I can find my way out. . . "

"First on the left, sharp to the right, then

down the steps," I prompted.

"Herbert," commanded my Aunt, when he had gone, "take that dog to the door and turn him loose. He will find his own way back to his home."

He whispered discreetly behind his hand. The effect was instantaneous.

"What?" almost screamed my Aunt. "Gone—again?"

The butler cleared his throat. It was

obvious that the task pained him.

"The kennelman says, your ladyship, that when he went to fetch the animal to wash him, as instructed, he found that where he



"'What?' almost screamed my Aunt. 'Gone-again?'"

"Yes, Aunt," I hastened.

It was towards the end of a peaceful luncheon that the second bombshell dropped. Jepson, that excellent butler who taught me first the intricacies of the leg-break in cricket, stooped reverentially over the back of my Aunt's chair at the head of the festive board. had been tied to the palings was—was——"
"Was what?" Irritation made itself

apparent in Lady Hesperia's tones.

"Was nothing," explained Jepson. meaning, your ladyship, is that the dog had

"Gone?" echoed Beauty Boy's pro-

prietor incredulously.

"Disappeared."

For a dumbly raging moment Aunt Hesperia toyed with her dessert fork. It was clear she was considering it in the light of a weapon of assault.

"Then, what are you standing there for?" she burst out at length. "Find him! Search for him! Get out into the

streets! Go! I don't---"

The rest of the exhortation was lost on me. It reached me as a distant rumble as I tore down the stairs. But I never reached the pavements. As I passed, a footman stopped me, calling me to the telephone.

"Lord Leamington's compliments," the ntan said. "And his lordship would like a

word with you."

"Listen, Bertie!" came the voice of St. Leger over the wire. "Have they found out that I've swiped that dog from the area yet ? "

The receiver slithered through my fingers, but I caught it up.

"Do you mean to say you had the infernal crust to--"

"Hush! hush!" he urged. "The dog was there as I was thrown out. What else was a fellow to do? What about bringing him back? What I mean is, after the way that Disease has been snapping me up all day, do you think it wise to keep it over till to-morrow? We come in on this now," he added generously, "fifty-fifty."

For a moment I thought. For all that

may be said of St. Leger, he is seldom long

in getting off the mark.

"Bring him along here in about half an hour," I advised at length. "Where is the

dog now?"

'As soon as I'd swiped him," he explained over the wire, "I dashed him along to the 'Leathern Bottel' in a cab. You can't carry a dog who looks like that all over London not when the police are looking for him. The trouble was to find a place where they would keep their mouths shut—and where a fellow could explain-"

"Go on!" I urged coldly.

"Tuke may be knocking around, I'll admit, but he'd never dare to blackmail me after the way he fooled you this morning----''

"Fooled me?"

A chuckle sounded from the other end. "As I told the landlord just now at that pub," St. Leger confided, "I soon saw that that dog's spots were too red. They should have been blacker! You couldn't mistake that imitation for the real goods, once you've seen the real Beauty Boy. I told the land-

" Never mind the landlord. You're bringing the dog round in about half an hour?" Righty-ho! Those spots should have

been much blacker. Almost——"

I hung up the receiver and broke the news to my Aunt. She took it so calmly that I at once spotted a weak link in the chain. Sinking my rancour at that one-sided auction, I called in my imagination to my friend's assistance.

"He happened to see a disreputablelooking man tampering with the dog's lead in the area as he left the house," I explained.

"Indeed?" put in Aunt Hesperia, with-

out much interest.

"Yes," I hurried on. "The fellow had the dog loose while St. Leger watched, and then he chased him all——"

"Who chased whom-the man or the

dog ? "

"St. Leger chased the dog-thief all over the place . . ."

"And caught him?" My Aunt's eye-

brows described a delicate arch.

"The man or the dog?" I temporised.
"It doesn't matter," Aunt Hesperia decided. "Let me know when he arrives."

St. Leger arrived a few minutes before the prescribed half-hour, and I met him in the hall.

"Well, here we are, dear boy!" he laughed, and patted me heartily on the back. The twice-lost dog tugged uneasily at the "They gave him a bit of a wash and brush-up at the pub," he explained, indicating with a wave of his hand the laundered black and white of the animal's coat.

What he had had to say about the spots was certainly true. These were no russet daubs: they stood out like currants in plumduff. With a caution, I passed on the fiction of the chase of the alleged dog-thief.

"I'll "Quite good!" he commended. stick to that story. Sounds well. Well,

what about-"

"She's in her boudoir upstairs . . ."

As he climbed the stairs and disappeared with his precious burden at the end of the leash I lingered in the hall, and it was as well that I did so. Scarcely had the door of the boudoir closed behind him, when Jepson, Prince of Butlers, plucked urgently at my sleeve.

There's a man been on to me on the telephone below-stairs," he confided. "He lives in the Market-"

"B. Tuke!" I groaned in a flash of in-

"That is the name, Mr. George. You know him, sir?"

"Go on!" I begged.

"He says, sir, that he has her ladyship's dog in safe-keeping. Found him again wandering in the Market, and he says shall he bring him along?" Jepson coughed discreetly. "He mentioned, sir, the matter of a reward—"

"But—Lord Leamington has just brought

the dog home!"

"This person, sir, states that that is all a mistake. His lordship must have mistaken the dog again. It appears he has been experimenting with dye for the coat, sir. This morning when his lordship brought in the animal, he had been trying a russet-red. This afternoon, when the dog returned home from us here, sir, he experimented, so he tells me, with a darker shade. A hobby, so it seems, sir. Her ladyship's dog, Beauty Boy, gnawed through his leash. He has, he states, the pieces where the dog was tied to the palings. What he wants to—""

"He would have the pieces," I said, and paused. Conscience dragged my thoughts up the stairs to the boudoir. Memory of that auction at the "Leathern Bottel" held them back. The picture of my Aunt examining the change of dye settled

the matter.

"Jepson," I commanded hurriedly.

" Sir ? "

"You should be more careful about lending your dog."

"I will bear it in mind, sir."

"What—er—was the reward when you recovered the dog this morning?"

Jepson fixed his eye on the ceiling.

"Her ladyship was pleased to make it £25, sir—one-tenth of the value of the animal—the customary—"

"What do you think it will be when the

dog-er-turns up once more?"

For a moment he considered. "Her ladyship is very generous where her dogs are concerned, sir," he hedged.

"She is," I agreed. "And so is—or has

been-Lord Leamington."

"Indeed, sir?"

"I thought it might interest you. Thirty

pounds, in fact."

The slight tension that came to Jepson's lips showed that either the arithmetic, or the memory, of B. Tuke had failed him at some time.

"I'm obliged, sir," he acknowledged gratefully.

"And, Jepson."

" Sir ? "

"You may get my hat and stick. I am about to leave the house."

For a moment the old man lent an ear to vague sounds of unrest coming from upstairs.

"If I may say so, sir," he confided,

"that would be all for the best."

#### THE GARDENER.

DAY after day in the train
I passed that miniature garden,
But never saw anyone there,
Never a sign of its maker.
I passed it in sun and in rain;
Saw its small fountain at play
On colourful beds, and on bare
Lilliput rocks; night and day;
Springtime and fall; song-shaker
At carol on bright cherry spray;
Or when the frost came with a stipple
Of silver, and painted death fair.

But to-day, as I passed in the train, I saw the miniature-maker,
The weaver of sunshine and rain,
Artist in blossom and spray.
Yes, he stood in his garden to-day,
Proud 'mid perfection—a cripple.

RICHARD CHURCH.

# HORACE DOES HIS BIT • •

### By RICHMAL CROMPTON

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

ITTLE Mr. Cremer generally enjoyed Saturday mornings. He did not go to the office on Saturday mornings. Instead he dallied deliciously with the sausage and kidney (he always had sausage and kidney for breakfast on Saturdays) and then sat by the fire in his slippers reading the newspaper. When he had read the newspaper he would, if the weather were inviting, go for a little stroll, and if the weather were uninviting he would read the newspaper Cccasionally Mr. Cremer would write a letter to the newspaper on Saturday morning, and occasionally—very, very occasionally—the letters were printed. They were always on the same subject—the Evils of Civilisation. Mr. Cremer liked to compare us unfavourably with our hardy ancestors, the Ancient Britons. As he knew really-very little of the Ancient Britons beyond the fact that they were "a sturdy, virile race of magnificent physique," it was quite an easy and effective thing to do.

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Mr. Cremer looked forward all the week to Saturday morning. It was a pleasant little oasis in the desert of his daily toil.

But Mr. Cremer wasn't enjoying this Saturday morning a bit. He dragged breakfast out to its usual Saturday morning length and then sat over the fire reading the newspaper, inspired solely by a dogged British spirit of conservativeness perseverance. The sausages and kidneys somehow hadn't tasted right and there wasn't any news worth speaking of in the paper. The real reason for all this was that Mr. Cremer was worried. Three things were worrying him. One was the fact that he had written to his employer last night demanding a substantial rise in salary. It was rather a risky step to take and Mr. Cremer had an uncomfortable feeling that it mightn't come off. He had put a certain amount of bluff into his letter, and bluff, Mr.

Cremer was uneasily aware, was not always safe in real life. Mr. Cremer had airily hinted in his letter to his employer that if Mr. Jones had no use for his services at the sum named, other employers might have, and now Mr. Cremer was horribly afraid that Mr. Jones would take him at his word and leave him to those other employers who, Mr. Cremer had vaguely given him to understand, were so anxious for his services. Mr. Cremer had terrible visions of himself "on the rocks," unemployed, cadging for work, no longer able to provide for his wife and daughter as such a wife and daughter should be provided for. . . .

He was worried, too, about the wife and daughter.

Mrs. Cremer was the most pleasant, amiable, good-natured, round, plump, podgy little woman imaginable. She adored Mr. Cremer and Mr. Cremer adored her. But and it was quite a big BUT-Mrs. Cremer had social ambitions and they caused both herself and her husband considerable anxiety. Mrs. Cremer liked to know the Best People, but sometimes the Best People, deceived by that round, plump, smiling ornateness of Mrs. Cremer (Mrs. Cremer had an incurable penchant for bright clothes that was the natural outcome of her bright and simple disposition) applied to Mrs. Cremer the horrible epithet "vulgar," and in their exclusiveness of subtle and harmonious colourings would have none of her.

A new neighbour had arrived at The Laurels, which was next door to The Chestnuts, where the Cremers lived. Now The Laurels was a much larger and altogether more imposing place than The Chestnuts, but, notwithstanding that, Mrs. Cremer had dared once more the Nemesis of the Presuming and had called on Mrs. Harold Vernon of The Laurels.

Mrs. Harold Vernon had been out, but

Mrs. Cremer had been much impressed by the smart housemaid and the hall of which she had caught a glimpse ("oak chests and stags' heads and swords and things, love," she had said to Mr. Cremer), and her hopes of a friendship with the owners of all this had fluttered excitedly in her simple breast. But to-day (according to the book of etiquette which Mrs. Cremer perused diligently with her pleasant lips pursed and her pleasant brow drawn into an anxious frown) was the last day upon which Mrs. Vernon could with politeness repay the call and Mrs. Cremer was horribly, horribly afraid that she wasn't going to. And Mr. Cremer also was horribly, horribly afraid that she wasn't going to. Not that Mr. Cremer cared two pins for Mrs. Vernon, or her oak chests, or her stags' heads, or her smart housemaid. But he didn't want Polly to have another Social Disappointment. Polly took Social Disappointments so hard. Not that she moped or sulked. Polly wasn't that sort at all. She bore them bravely. She pretended to be her own jolly laughing self. And it almost came off. But not quite. Not as far as Mr. Cremer was concerned, anyway. He always saw, and his tender heart always ached for her, though he never dared to offer any sympathy. He was only specially nice to her, bringing her home a lobster or a crab for supper (she loved crabs and lobsters), making his little tales about Mr. Jones and the office more entertaining than usual, and telling her how young she looked to-night and so on. . . . All husbands know how to do that sort of thing. Or if they don't they ought to. . . .

Then there was his daughter Sybil. It was extraordinary that he and Polly had ever come to have a daughter like Sybil—a slender slip of a thing who everyone agreed was as pretty as a picture. They both adored Sybil, and Sybil had not caused them a moment's uneasiness (except once or twice in her childhood when she came out in a rash after eating too many strawberries) until now. She had had a youthful love affair going on ever since she left school—a love affair with as nice a young man as you could possibly find, just the sort of simple, honest, unselfish, unassuming young fellow that Mr. and Mrs. Cremer would have chosen from all the world as a son-in-law. And the little romance had gone swimmingly-until this This month Sybil had met last month. another man-a handsome man, a rich man, a man of the world, who on the strength of an assured income followed no trade or profession, a man called Rudolph (the very name savoured in Mr. Cremer's eyes of villainy) Mortimer, who seemed to have cut out the simple John (Mr. Cremer approved of the name John) entirely. And it worried Mr. Cremer. He wanted Sybil to be happy. He wanted Sybil to marry John. He didn't like Mr. Rudolph Mortimer at all. Neither did Polly. Sybil was at present staying with friends, but the friends were also friends of Mr. Rudolph Mortimer, and presumably Mr. Rudolph Mortimer was having it all his own way, because John was only a clerk in an office, with only a somewhat battered cycle-car combination to set against Mr. Mortimer's very smart two-seater.

These three worries chased each other through little Mr. Cremer's mind as he sat smoking his favourite pipe and reading his morning paper and thrusting out his carpetslippered feet towards the blaze. His Mr. Jones, Polly's Mrs. Vernon (it seems absurd that he should worry over Polly's Mrs. Vernon, but he was so fond of Polly that he did), Sybil's Mr. Mortimer . . . They spoilt the Saturday morning completely, they made his pipe in some mysterious way less enjoyable, his paper less interesting; they even made the fire less warm and less cheerful.

Then his eyes wandered to the little cabinet in the corner by the fireplace. The cabinet contained his collection of snuffboxes. Little Mr. Cremer did not drink or belong to a club or play bridge or golf or poker. Instead he collected snuff-boxes. When he felt depressed he would open the cabinet and bring them all out and gaze at them affectionately and polish them tenderly, and when he felt thoroughly worried he would go out and buy another.

He put his pipe upon the mantelpiece and folded up his paper. He had decided to go out and buy another.

He had noticed the antique shop in a back street only the other week and had decided that he'd try it the next time he bought a snuff-box. He'd always dealt at Baxter's in High Street before.

This shop was larger inside than you'd have expected from its windows. It was dark too and rather dingy, with great shadowy piles of heterogeneous "curios" in its corners. It called to Mr. Cremer's mind the curiosity shop in Balzac's Peau de Chagrin, which he had read (in a translation, of course, for Mr. Cremer disapproved of foreign languages as much as he disapproved of foreign goods) only the week before. The proprietor

suited his background in a way that was most satisfactory. He was little and ancient and wizened. He looked like a piece of old ivory. It occurred to Mr. Cremer (who possessed more imagination than anyone, judging solely by appearance, would have credited him with) that it was just the sort of shop in which one might find strange Eastern charms and amulets—Aladdin's lamps, wild asses' skins, genie-haunted rings, jewels with secret powers for good or evil.

The old man opened a cupboard and showed him a small snuff-box with a blue enamel lid. On the shelf next to the snuff-box was a most curiously shaped piece of

amber-very old and worn.

"What's that?" said little Mr. Cremer with interest.

"Oh! that's nothing much, sir," said the old man, taking out the snuff-box and closing the cupboard quickly—" just a piece of old amber . . . that's all, sir."

It was certainly a nice snuff-box. Mr. Cremer's eyes gleamed with pleasure as he examined it. And it wasn't really expensive either—not as snuff-boxes go, that is. Mr. Cremer concluded the bargain and went rather reluctantly from the shop. He loved to prowl about old curiosity shops, but he felt that he couldn't "prowl" here as he did at Baxter's, not yet, anyway. One purchase hardly entitled you to prowl . . . He'd come again next week perhaps and buy something else. Then he'd be entitled to prowl . . .

He went home to lunch. Although he felt pride and pleasure in his new purchase, still the atmosphere was not really lightened.

They both pretended to be their ordinary selves. Polly kept saying how nice her new curtains looked and Mr. Cremer kept saying how pleased he was about his new snuff-box and the new little shop he'd discovered. But it wasn't really any use. A heavy cloud of depression hung over them.

After lunch Polly went upstairs for her nap. Polly always had an official nap on her bed after Saturday lunch and he always had an unofficial nap in the arm-chair by the

dining-room fire. . . .

But to-day he couldn't sleep. And gradually he realised that it wasn't his worries that kept him awake. It was the memory of that curious piece of amber. He had felt certain as soon as he saw it that it possessed strange properties. The shop had reminded him at once of the shop in La Peau de Chagrin; it was a shop that must in the very nature of things contain magic and mystery. Per-

haps you rubbed the piece of amber. Little Mr. Cremer's heart beat quickly at the thought of the vast possibilities that lay beyond that. I have already said that little Mr. Cremer possessed more imagination than you would have given him credit for. He was not one of those people who hold that witchcraft and magic fled the world at the invention of machinery. He held that they still lurked, unsought and undiscovered, in such places as—well, as old curiosity shops. He came to a sudden decision. He put his newly purchased snuff-box into his pocket, went quietly out into the hall, put on his hat and coat and set off briskly down the street.

The owner of the curiosity shop seemed to open the cupboard reluctantly. The piece of amber was still there. The snuffbox lay in the antique dealer's hand.

"You want to exchange this for the amber?" said the old man in his toneless voice. Mr. Cremer's heart was beating un-

evenly.

"Er—yes," he said—"that is, of course, if they're about the same price. If the amber's more expensive, I'll—I'll go as far as I can."

He said this guiltily—thinking of his possibly impending dismissal. Of course, he oughtn't to be spending money on this sort of thing. On the other hand, if it was what he thought it was, it would solve all his life's troubles.

"It's about the same price, sir," said the antique dealer, taking it out and putting it on Mr. Cremer's hand, "but"—he threw Mr. Cremer a strange glance—"but I shouldn't really advise you to buy it, sir."

"Why not?" stammered Mr. Cremer.
"You—you rub it, I suppose," he went on,
"and—and—and——" His voice failed.

"Yes, sir," said the old man, giving him what seemed like a glance of pity, "but I've had a lot of complaints of it. . . . He's well-meaning, you know, about the best meaning of the lot, but," he shook his grey head, "not very intelligent, sir,—often indiscreet and rather clumsy in his methods, sir."

Little Mr. Cremer's eyes were agleam with

excitement.

"Do—do I just rub it?" he whispered.
"Yes, sir," said the old man. "This one grants five wishes—only five wishes—and you needn't rub it each time. Rub it once and that will be enough."

Five wishes. Mr. Cremer became suddenly suspicious of the old man. Suppose he changed his mind and wouldn't let him have it after all. He clasped it tightly and

almost ran out of the shop.

Back in the dining-room of The Chestnuts, Mr. Cremer drew the curtains and locked the door. His dapper little form was quivering with excitement. He took out the piece of amber and rubbed it. hand, it certainly had appeared. The charm had worked. The thing was beyond all doubt an amulet.

"I shall call you Horace," said Mr. Cremer, gravely courteous. The thing certainly ought to have a name.

A large beaming grin of delight overspread



"Evidently it liked its name."

At first it seemed as if nothing were going to happen. Then very, very gradually something took shape. It was only a face—a large smiling face, rather wistful, a wholly good-natured face with something suggestive of a friendly mongrel about it. There wasn't a body at all. Mr. Cremer felt that as a genie the thing lacked dignity. On the other

the bodiless countenance. Evidently it liked its name. Then very, very slowly, and in a manner reminiscent of the immortal Cheshire cat, it faded away, leaving Mr. Cremer alone again in the room.

Mr. Cremer drew the curtains and unlocked the door. He felt for the first time in his life complete master of his destiny.

He had five wishes. He could transform the world if he liked. But he wasn't going to do anything as altruistic as that. Instead, he was going to solve the problems of his own life. And he wasn't going to do anything rash, of course. He was going to be very careful indeed of his five wishes.

He went over to the window. Several of his neighbours who, less fortunate than he, went to work on Saturday mornings were just returning from the station. Mr. Cremer watched them with interest and, so doing, completely forgot his amulet. First came Mr. Bloggs, who worked in an Insurance Office in the city and had a wife who drank. Next came Mr. Francis, who was on the Stock Exchange and whose daughters imagined (mistakenly) that they were musical. Next came Mr. Lewes, who had long spindly legs and a long neck and a small The sight of Mr. Lewes always amused Mr. Cremer. Mr. Cremer, in fact, never saw him without half unconsciously wishing that he might witness the slight further transformation that would complete Mr. Lewes's likeness to a giraffe. The usual thought passed through his mind. But with unusual results. To Mr. Cremer's horror, Mr. Lewes suddenly disappeared and, in his place, walking primly and demurely as Mr. Lewes himself, down the suburban road past the suburban houses, appeared a giraffe, a giraffe who seemed to think its presence among the little procession of business men quite a natural and seemly thing. There was even a slight swagger in its gait as it paced along which reminded one strongly of Mr. Lewes, who considered himself a cut above his neighbours because his wife's sister had married a baronet's eldest son. there formed distinctly from the shadows before Mr. Cremer's horrified gaze the face of Horace, wearing a smile of pride and pleasure as though he expected to be congratulated on his prompt attention to his master's Instantly the whole street was in confusion. People rushed out of the houses. Those who were nearest the giraffe rushed Those who were far away rushed Only the giraffe walked on, calm and unperturbed. Mr. Cremer was pale with horror. His mouth dropped open; his eyes bulged. Summoning his stunned faculties, he hastily wished Mr. Lewes back again. The change happened to take place just as the giraffe was sedately turning the corner that led to his—I mean to Mr. Lewes's—house. The crowd following it round the corner found only Mr. Lewes, peacefully and unconsciously pursuing his homeward way, and it never occurred to them that he had not been doing that all the time. They swarmed into a large and well-wooded garden with an open gate in which they thought the giraffe must have taken refuge.

Mr. Cremer turned from the window mopping his brow. He was pale and breathless. Horace was certainly indiscreet. He really might have shown a little more sense. of his precious wishes gone. Mr. Cremer felt quite annoyed. Horace's wistful smile was already forming over by the fireplace. Horace was evidently as disappointed in his master as his master was in him. Horace had been proud of his giraffe. . . .

The door opened and Mrs. Cremer burst She looked flushed and excited. Her round rosy face shone with joy. She shut the door behind her.

"Oh, Alfy darling," she said breathlessly, "she's come!"

"Who's come, love?" said Mr. Cremer, sitting down suddenly because he found that his knees were unsteady. The giraffe had certainly been something of a shock.

"Mrs. Vernon, Alfy, and she's in the drawing-room. She's come to call, Alfy. Alfy, I didn't tell you, but I was ever so afraid she wouldn't come."

"It would have been her loss, if she hadn't," said Mr. Cremer stoutly, emerging from his own troubles at the call of conjugal lovalty.

"Well, Alfy, it would have been a slight, look at it how you will, but she's come, so it's

all right."

"P'r'aps you'd better go in to her, then," said Mr. Cremer, making an effectual attempt to loosen his collar, which since the giraffe episode seemed to have suddenly become too tight. It certainly had been more of a shock than he'd realised at the time.

"Oh, Alfy darling," pleaded Mrs. Cremer, "do come in with me. I shan't feel half so nervous if you're there, and you always know how to talk to people so much better than I do, and I always feel so proud of you, Alfy."

Little Mr. Cremer smiled and bridled and flushed and preened himself. He loved to think of Polly's being proud of him.

"Well, love," he said deprecatingly, "if you think . . . though I'm not much hand at talking-

Polly looked at him. "You look a bit

tired, Alfy," she said anxiously.
"Well," he confessed, "I've had a bit of —" Then he realised that he simply couldn't tell Polly about Horace. He couldn't tell anyone. They wouldn't understand. They wouldn't believe him. They'd think he was mad. He swallowed the rest of his sentence in a cough. "I mean," he went on hastily, "just these early Spring days . . . rather trying . . . rather trying . . . rather trying . . . hadn't we better go in to her, love? She won't like being left so long."

Mrs. Vernon was tall and angular. Her greeting revealed quite plainly her consciousness of the general superiority of The Laurels over The Chestnuts. Conceited old creature, thought little Mr. Cremer indignantly. If only she knew—he chuckled silently to himself—if only she knew that he could turn her into a frog or a toad or a Hottentot by the turn of an eyelash. He could almost see Horace's face in the shadows of the room,—Horace eager, wistful, anxious to oblige, on the look-out for his slightest wish; Horace still rather disappointed by the disappearance of his beautiful giraffe.

Mr. Cremer determined to keep a severe check upon his mental wishes. He had only three left. He must husband them carefully, use them only after deep and thoughtful

consideration.

"There was quite an excitement in the road as I came along," Mrs. Vernon was saying.

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Cremer with polite

iterest.

"Yes, they were hunting a giraffe."
"A giraffe!" screamed Mrs. Cremer.

"Yes. Escaped from some travelling menagerie, I suppose—they said it had taken refuge in a garden just round the corner.

I didn't see the animal myself."

Mr. Cremer took out his handkerchief and furtively mopped his brow again. The giraffe topic, however, was soon dropped and gradually the atmosphere became more normal and friendly. Mrs. Vernon and Mrs. Cremer began to discuss the tradesmen and the shops and the other neighbours. Occasionally Mr. Cremer put in a "Really?" or a "Yes, I quite agree with you," or a "I've often thought so myself." Mr. Cremer's conversational powers were a myth that existed only in his wife's imagination. Except, of course, on the Evils of Civilisation. And neither of them would give him an appropriate opening for that.

Mr. Cremer became sleepy. His eyelids dropped as he took in idly the fashionable appearance of the visitor; lazily he wondered what her husband did; he noticed a long and obviously valuable string of pearls round her neck. By Jove, thought Mr. Cremer,

very, very sleepily, I wish those were mine.

Instantly the face of Horace appeared, remained for one moment wearing the proud smile of one who has done a duty and thinks he has done it well, then disappeared.

Mr. Cremer blinked. He had for the moment completely forgotten Horace. He looked apprehensively at Mrs. Vernon, afraid that she, too, might have turned into a giraffe. But no, she was there. Then he gave a start. Her pearls weren't there. She herself was evidently quite ignorant of their disappearance; she continued to enlarge on the gristly nature of the meat which the butcher had sent her last week. Then suddenly she looked down. She went purple. She screamed. She rose and pointed dramatically at her hostess. "Mrs. Cremer," she said, "since I entered this house a string of most valuable pearls has been stolen from me.''

"No!" gasped Mrs. Cremer in dismay. Mr. Cremer sat still and mopped his brow again. His face wore the unmistakable appearance of guilt. He cowered; he flushed; he looked on to the ground. The visitor turned her relentless eyes on to him. He nearly choked. Then suddenly her finger shot out again, this time in the direction of Mr. Cremer's pocket. Mr. Cremer hastily looked down at his pocket. Part of the string of pearls was hanging out of it. Oh, certainly Horace was "clumsy in his methods." Mrs. Vernon made a grab at it and pulled out the whole string.

" Thief!" she screamed.

Mr. Cremer sat with bowed head, murmuring something unintelligible. Mrs. Cremer burst into tears. Mrs. Vernon drew herself up to her full height. Her eyes blazed scorn and condemnation.

"Very cleverly done," she said with a magnificent sneer. "I didn't know that I had thieves for my neighbours, but I shall not fail to lay my information with the proper authorities." With another splendid gesture she drew her furs about her and swept from the room.

"Oh, Alfy," sobbed Mrs. Cremer, "how could you? We're ruined! Alfy, did you yield to sudden temptation, or have you been leading a double life all these years?"

Mr. Cremer tore his hair. He spluttered incoherent exclamations about "amber" and "Horace" and "wishes," but they were drowned by Mrs. Cremer's sobs. . . .

On to this scene of conjugal turmoil the housemaid opened the door, gazed around in amazement, collected herself with an effort, and said:

"Mr. Jones to see you, sir. In the study, sir."

Mr. Cremer, secretly glad of an excuse for escape, followed her into the hall. There

must use a wish to straighten it out. He had two wishes left. Of course if he could get Mr. Jones to raise his screw by tact and thereby save a wish, so much the better. He squared his shoulders and entered the study.



"Instantly the whole street was in confusion."

he stood still for a minute after the housemaid had disappeared to impart her spicy story to the cook.

This, Mr. Cremer told himself, was going to be a most important interview. He must go carefully. He must go warily. He must for the time being try to forget the pearl episode. If the worst came to the worst, he

Mr. Jones, stout and self-important, stood by the fireplace. He went straight to the point. "How do you do, Mr. Cremer?" he said. "I've called about the letter I received from you this morning."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Cremer non-committally. "Won't you sit down, sir?"

Mr. Jones sat down.

"I need hardly say," went on Mr. Jones, "that I fully appreciate everything you say in your letter.

The duel had begun. Mr. Jones, Mr. Cremer gathered from his tone, was going to that I feel the pinch of that as much as you

Mr. Jones let this point sink in and then said suavely:

"I appreciate your services enormously, Mr. Cremer. I only wish I could adequately express my opinion of you as an employee." The battle was to begin with bouquetthrowing. All right. Mr. Cremer would show that he could do that as well as anyone. "And I only wish," he murmured, "that



try to keep him and yet not to raise his salary. If he could, that is.

"The cost of living," murmured Mr. Cremer, "has risen enormously."

"Exactly," said Mr. Jones with a note of triumph in his voice. "I can assure you

for a moment in a corner and a voice began to speak in the room.

"In the first place," said the voice, "I consider you a self-indulgent, unscrupulous, lazy hog. Every day of your life you come late to the office and go early. You leave

all the real work to the clerks. You take a luncheon interval of at least three hours a day. Do you really think we don't know when you put up 'Not to be disturbed' on your door that you're only having a nice little snooze inside?"

Mr. Cremer began to realise with horror that this was his voice. Glancing in the mirror over the mantelpiece he realised that his lips were moving with the words. It was

his voice coming from him.

"And don't think," went on the voice, "that we don't see your goings on with the girltypists—goo-gooeyes and what not. And they all make fun of you, let me tell you. They can't stick you at any price. That Miss Franks can take you off to a turn. Look at your face. D'you think any girl in her senses would really want to get off with you? I tell you there's not a person in the office that doesn't despise you and make fun of you behind your back——"

Mr. Jones's face had gone from yellow to pink, from pink to red, from red to purple, and from purple back to yellow. Now sud-

denly he found his voice.

"Be quiet, sir!" he yelled.

"No, I won't!" shouted Mr. Cremer's voice from Mr. Cremer's lips. "I've a lot more to tell you. I've only just begun—"

"I dismiss you from my service from this instant," yelled Mr. Jones, going round to purple again, "and don't dare to come to me for a reference."

With that Mr. Jones stamped out of the

house, slamming the door.

Mr. Cremer sat down limply and passed a hand over his brow. Then he got up and went cautiously into the hall. Polly was still sobbing in the drawing-room. He could hear her. Oh, blow Horace! He simply daren't face her to tell her he'd got the sack. Still, if he was to go to prison for stealing pearls, he supposed that it didn't really matter whether he had the sack or not. Then he remembered that he'd got one wish left. With judicious management it might still save him. But he wouldn't use it rashly. He'd wait till a crucial moment arrived and then—

There came a ring at the front door. Perhaps this was the crucial moment. Perhaps this was the policeman coming to arrest him for stealing Mrs. Vernon's pearls. With a quickly beating heart he threw open the door.

It wasn't a policeman. It was Mr. Rudolph Mortimer, sleek and handsome and smiling as ever.

"Oh, come in," said Mr. Cremer, greatly relieved.

He ushered him into the study, whose atmosphere seemed to be still a-quiver with agitation from the last interview it had witnessed.

"Your daughter," said Mr. Mortimer, has promised to be my wife, and I've just called to settle things up from a business

point of view."

This annoyed Mr. Cremer. "Oh, you have, have you?" he said; "but let me tell you, young man, that I don't want my daughter to marry you. I don't intend my daughter to marry you. My daughter is not yet of age, and I refuse to give my consent to this marriage."

The young man merely smiled. "I suppose," he said, "that I am entitled to ask

your reasons."

Mr. Cremer looked like an infuriated little

turkey cock.

"You are," he said, "and I'll give them to you. You're an idler, sir. You live on unearned money. Your only aim in life is gratification of your desires. You're a typical product of an effete civilisation." Little Mr. Cremer could not resist this opening. He was getting really worked up. "When I compare the products of this age with those sturdy ancestors of ours, the Ancient Britons, who stood so gloriously at bay on the Ring of Chanctonbury—I tell you, sir, I wish I were one of them. I tell you——"

Mr. Cremer became conscious of a chilly feeling about his legs. He looked down at them. His neat grey trousers had disappeared. He was not even clothed in his all-wool winter-weight pants. In fact, his legs, except for a curious kind of legging, were bare. His eyes travelled slowly up his figure, which seemed to have expanded in some strange way in all directions. The upper part was clothed inadequately in skins and the bare places were—yes, a most curious thing, but no doubt of it at all—the bare places were painted blue. Mr. Cremer glanced at the reflection of his face in the glass. And it wasn't his face. It was a great ferocious bearded face that quite frightened Mr. Cremer. He turned his gaze slowly upon his visitor. His visitor was crouching in terror in a corner of the room.

Mr. Cremer began to try to explain. "Don't be frightened," he said, "it's just—just a sort of—I mean it'll be all right in a minute——"

At least that is what Mr. Cremer meant

to say. But a flow of strange, meaningless words fell from his lips instead. Mr. Cremer was reassuring his visitor in the language of the Ancient Britons. His visitor, with one last glance of horror, threw up the window, vaulted over the window-sill and fled as if for his life out of the garden and down the road towards the station.

Mr. Cremer was left alone. And then a horrible thought occurred to him. He'd used up his fifth and last wish. He'd have to be an Ancient Briton for the rest of his life. He couldn't get back. He wished violently to become himself again (wished it both mentally and aloud in the language of the Ancient Britons), but nothing happened. Horace could do nothing more for him. Only in a corner of the room flickered for a second the ghost of Horace's proud smile, Horace regarding with satisfaction what he evidently looked upon as a very pretty piece of work.

Mr. Cremer crept out into the hall. He wondered whether to go to Polly and try to explain. But he knew that he couldn't explain. He talked a language that no one could understand. He heard someone opening the drawing-room door. It must be Polly. No, he certainly couldn't meet Polly, not till he'd thought out some plan of action, anyhow. In sudden panic he slipped out of the front door down the garden and, keeping well in the shade of the bushes, to the front gate. There, putting a good face upon it and walking with a certain dignity, Mr. Cremer, fur, blue paint, beard, bare legs and all, proceeded along the street.

An idea had occurred to him. He'd go to the antique dealer. Surely he'd be able to do something for him. He turned the corner and collided with a policeman. The policeman, who was a young fellow of great resource, collected his stunned faculties with remarkable swiftness and laid a hand upon Mr. Cremer's enormous muscular arm.

"'You can't go about like this, sir," he said.

Mr. Cremer drew himself up with great dignity and explained in his best manner that he was committing no infraction of the law and that no one had any right to interfere with him. Or rather he meant to say that, but what fell from his lips was again only a stream of uncouth and quite unintelligible sounds. The policeman looked grave and made a sign to another policeman who was standing at the next corner. The second policeman joined them. Mr. Cremer continued to explain that he was committing

no infraction of the law and that no one had any right to interfere with him. They shook their heads. One of them wrote in a notebook. The other said "Balmy" in a tone of finality, and together they shepherded Mr. Cremer to the police-station.

In the police-station Mr. Cremer repeated his explanation, and yet more policemen looked grave and frowned at his fur and blue paint, listened to the strange sounds his explanation made, wrote on notebooks, and murmured "balmy" to each other. Mr. Cremer became desperate. He had an inspiration and said his name. To his surprise it came out as his own name quite plainly, "Cremer." This touched some chord of intelligence in the youngest policeman, who said that he knew that a Cremer lived at The Chestnuts near the station. The others, after silently sucking their pencils, decided to send to The Chestnuts.

In less than a quarter of an hour Polly arrived. She looked upset. Mr. Cremer beamed at her. She stared at him in amazed condemnation.

"Polly," said Mr. Cremer, with pleading in his voice.

"How dare you call me Polly?" said Polly with spirit, and to the policeman, "I've never seen him before in my life."

Mr. Cremer began to plead with her. The pleading was really rather moving, but it didn't move anyone, because no one understood. They heard only strange barbaric sounds and saw strange barbaric mouthings. Once he put his hand on her arm. She screamed again. "Oh, don't let him touch me, the brute!" she said to the policeman.

"You know nothing about him then, 'M?" said one of the policemen.

"Never seen him before," said Polly angrily, "and if my husband had been in—he must have just gone out for a little walk—he wouldn't have allowed me to be sub-

jected to this insult—indeed he wouldn't." So Polly, outraged and indignant, went.

That was to Mr. Cremer the last straw. During the last few minutes he had been increasingly conscious of something unfamiliar about his physique, of a sensation of strength and energy that he had never felt before. He wanted to knock someone down—to hit someone really hard.

The policemen were at the other end of the room, consulting over their notebooks. Suddenly an avalanche seemed to descend upon them. They were scattered far and wide by a pair of powerful fists, and Mr. Cremer leapt over them and through the door and into the street. And in the street he ran. He was conscious of a new and exhilarating power of speed. He ran exultantly. He leapt and uttered strange cries. He was aware of a large crowd pursuing him —a large crowd consisting of policemen and schoolboys and street loafers and those other members of the community with a penchant for being in whatever is going on. He heard women scream as he passed. A man ran out to stop him and at one touch of Mr. Cremer's enormous fist rolled over on the pavement. He turned down into a street and saw too late that he was in a cul de sac. His pursuers had already turned the corner. He snatched up a stick that was leaning against some railings, ran to the wall that closed the street, leapt upon a large barrel that happened to be there, and stood brandishing his stick and defying the oncoming crowd. They surged nearer. He threw back his head and uttered a terrible re-echoing cry. It was his battle cry.

"Alfy darling, what a noise." Little Mr. Cremer stopped making the strangling sound in his throat, opened his eyes and sat up. He was in the arm-chair by the fire in the dining-room. He was dressed as usual in his neat grey suit. The snuff-box with the blue enamel lid was on the table by his chair. His wife stood in the doorway watching him with a fond smile.

"Well, have you had a nice sleep, dar-

ling?" said his wife.

He blinked.

"Have I—have I—been—to—sleep?" he said.

She came in and shut the door.

"Yes, all afternoon, love. You've been having a beautiful sleep. I didn't like to wake you." Then with mysterious excitement: "She's been—she's just gone."

"Who?" said Mr. Cremer, still bewildered.

"Mrs. Vernon, love. And she's so nice --little and stout and pleasant, and she

knows those people we got so friendly with at Bournemouth, and she wants you and me to go in to tea to-morrow, and she hopes we're going to be great friends!"

"She didn't mention a giraffe, did she?"

said Mr. Cremer apprehensively.

"Gracious no!" said Mrs. Cremer.

"Why should she?"

"And nothing happened about her pearls, did it?" said Mr. Cremer, still gazing about him perplexedly.

"She wasn't wearing pearls, love," said Mrs. Cremer, looking at her husband with

some anxiety.

Mr. Cremer's eyes wandered back to the snuff-box on the table by his side.

"D-didn't I take that back to the

shop?" he said.

"Of course not, Alfy. Why, you've not been out since you bought it. You've been

asleep ever since lunch."

At that moment the maid entered bearing two letters upon a tray for Mr. Cremer. Mr. Cremer opened them in silence. The first one was from Mr. Jones, agreeing quite meekly to the advance of salary proposed by Mr. Cremer. It was written in a conciliatory, almost deprecating, tone. The second was from Sybil and began:

DEAR DADDY AND MUMMY,

This is to tell you that John's asked me to marry him and I'm going to and I'm frightfully happy.

"Well," said Mr. Cremer slowly, "so everything's turned out all right even without Horace!"

"Who's Horace, love?" said his wife.
"Oh, only someone I was dreaming

about," said Mr. Cremer.

"Was he nice?" demanded Mrs. Cremer. Mr. Cremer considered the question judicially for a minute. Then, as one who has taken everything impartially into consideration, he answered slowly:

" So-so."

#### WILL YOU?

WHEN I go forth, will you be there to meet me, Walking, free-limbed, along the upland road? When I look up, will you be there to greet me, Laughing beside the hay-wain's pungent load?

When the wind blows across the waving barley
Will you come down the narrow path between
And stand beside the elm-hung gate and parley,
And see my love and show me you have seen?

DOROTHY ROGERS.



"'Twill serve to-night, sir, but there be a new shark down to-"

## PARSON'S EYE

• By E. M. MILLER •

■ ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE
 ■

OTCOMBE CHURCH lies in a fold of the Sussex Downs, and looks southward to the sea where the fishermen's huts still cluster above the beach; it has little of interest beyond that which always clings to an ancient building, and in the churchyard you will look in vain for an amusing or even a poetic epitaph. Nevertheless, one inscription may hold your attention if you have the patience to decipher the dim lettering:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REVEREND JOHN TRENCOMBE
RECTOR OF MOTCOMBE,
KILLED NEAR THIS SPOT
OCTOBER 27, 17—

The rest of the date is illegible, but lower down, more rudely carved as though by another hand, a few more letters are discernible:

. . . . GIVETH . . S LIFE F . . . . EEP

If you, sir or madam, are of a romantic disposition you may not find it difficult to reconstruct for yourself the history of a devoted pastorate crowned by an heroic death, but you will have to do it without outside help. John Trencombe's name, with the dates of his fairly long incumbency, you will indeed find among the list of rectors framed in the porch, but Motcombe, questioned about him, will meet you with so

blank a stare that you may well wonder whether pageant or village institute will ever lure the English peasant to an interest in his past. Yet after you have departed in char-à-banc or car back to Eastbourne or Brighton, or whencesoever else you came, it may be that your questions have unlocked memories and that Trencombe's name will be bandied from one to the other across the ale-house floor in half sentences as of a tale too well known to need repeating. Sussex strain roots deeply in the soil, and it is likely that half present Motcombe was represented in the church when Parson Trencombe preached his last sermon. Certain it is that the girl who tried to warn him has descendants in the village to this day.

She had seated herself in the front row of the women's benches, but it is to be supposed that she heard little of the text, "The hireling fleeth," nor of the discourse which followed, with its very pointed allusions to the Methodist preacher who had found his way to even that remote spot, and had left somewhat hurriedly after an attempt to duck him in a dew-pond. Motcombe used sermon-time as an opportunity for meditation on its private affairs, and even the Rector as he rolled out his periods had attention to devote to the stranger sitting beneath the south-west window.

The man was young and well-knit, neatly, if a little foppishly, dressed, and Trencombe dismissed him from his mind as present to ogle one of Farmer's wenches. He came down the pulpit stairs, his black gown, illkept like everything else in the church, swelling out and adding breadth to his muscular figure, and then it was that the girl rose and whispered so low that he could barely catch the words.

"'Twill serve to-night, sir, but there be

a new shark down to-

The purple deepened in Parson Tren-

combe's cheek.

"Drat you," he said in a whisper as low as her own, "have you no decency left, woman, that you must tell me this here?"

The girl shrank back as he strode on to the priest's little door; it was remembered afterwards that she was the last parishioner except, perhaps, his cook—to whom he spoke.

In the pale sunlight outside the stranger

was waiting to accost him.

"Sir, you see before you a desperate

The Rector bore the intelligence with equanimity.

"And the reason for this desperation?" "It has a geographical basis—that this county should be so distant from Scotland."

It was the rectory dinner hour, and Parson Trencombe a man of a good stomach.

"Since the distance displeases you, let me beg of you to make it shorter. There lies the North, and since you say you have a journey of length, 'twere wise not to delay your start."

"You misunderstand me. This is no journey to take alone, seeing that it is Gretna

Green I would willingly see nearer." The Rector laughed appreciatively.

"You will need a swift chaise to evade pursuit. My sympathy you have, but why ask it of me?"

"A blacksmith's forge in Scotland, or in England a discreet and Established minister, it is the same thing," and the stranger bowed

"The same thing for the loving couple, but what of the knot-tier? No, sir, let it be the chaise, and in good time the stream which divides the kingdoms."

The younger man approached his head until it was close to the Rector's ear.

"But the reward, sir, think of the reward! The lifelong gratitude of Miss Lucy Wilmhurst. Why, one glance of her bright eyes

A light broke over Parson Trencombe's understanding, and he conceived more favourably of the lover's intelligence now that he discerned the reason which had singled him out from his brother clergy. Squire Wilmhurst's seat might be twenty miles away, but he owned much of the land about Motcombe, and even claimed, upheld by the law-courts, much of the greater tithe. The Rector was not the man to forget a defeat.

He eyed his interlocutor more closely. Time was-before an unsavoury interlude of his youth had made him satisfied to accept the retreat of orders—that he had lived among gentlemen. He could not mistake This fellow, for all his swaggerthe breed. ing assurance, was not of it. Truly a desirable son-in-law for the Squire! He knew the girl, a fair-haired chit, likely enough to be taken by the young man's showy comeliness. Rapidly he weighed the chances:

"I would not be at the breaking of young hearts," he said, not troubling to hide the sneer in his voice, "but this needs thinking on. You will do me the honour of dining

with me?"

The invitation had in it the nature of a

command, and the stranger found himself obediently walking in the direction of the rectory, which lay landward of the church, at some distance, therefore, from the village. It was a rambling old building, in the neglected condition to be expected where the solitary maid had been engaged rather for her powers of cooking than of cleaning, but the dinner, at which the master resolutely refused to speak of business, justified the choice. The meal was abundant and well served, washed down with French wines, followed, when the cloth was removed, by a bottle of brandy.

A crooked smile played for an instant round the guest's mouth as he set down his glass.

"Much smuggling in these parts?" he

asked carelessly.

His host shrugged his shoulders.

"There is a proverb, sir, you would do well to mark: it is ill talking of the rope in a house where the goodman has been hanged. You are safe enough with me, a law-abiding clergyman of the Established Church, but there are parts of Sussex where yours would be an imprudent question."

"You have your work, I suppose, in keeping your parishioners from sharing in

such practices?"

Parson Trencombe's fist came on the table with a violence which made the glasses ring.

"I have my work to teach them the Church catechism, not to speak of having to suffer the conversation of any chance cockerel who comes my way. Yet," he added, more peaceably, "there is little need for the expostulation you suggest; my people, poor fisher-folk and honest farmers, have too much risk with wind and weather to wish to run foul of the Excise into the bargain. But to come back to this business of yours: we will pledge the lady in another bumper and then one pipe of tobacco before we separate. I am too old a man to abet a maid against her lawful guardians, so it must be the road to Scotland after all."

The autumn afternoon was drawing to a close, and the candles were already lighted when the Rector stooped to take from the table drawer the long clay pipes with which to perform the concluding rite of hospitality. He believed himself of iron nerve, but his hand shook and some of the tobacco was spilt when he again raised his head. The stranger had risen noiselessly and was standing directly above him, pistol in hand.

For an instant the two men stared silently at one another, then the Rector recovered his power of speech.

"So you think to drive the priest to the altar perforce. 'Tis a strange requital of my hospitality, and augurs ill for Miss Lucy's married happiness."

"A truce with Miss Lucy; she has served her turn. I am here on another errand than my own; on no less a business than His

Majesty's."

For a moment all the blood seemed to desert Parson Trencombe's heart and surge in his brain, then his wits collected and he spoke with dignity.

"This is a strange fashion in which to inform me of His Majesty's pleasure, but you greatly deceive yourself if you imagine

I could oppose his wishes."

The other laughed contemptuously.

"You it is who are deceived, or rather rumour has it that you have not been deceived, hence this little precaution," he glanced significantly at his weapon, "otherwise how will it not grieve your fatherly heart to learn that the law has been defied in your own parish, and it may be that this very brandy, drunk by you in loyal ignorance, has paid no tribute to the revenue."

"There has been no charge brought against

Motcombe men."

"They have clever heads—or is it the directing intelligence that has eluded the vigilance of my predecessors? Whether it will avail against me, to-night will prove."

The Rector made a movement.

"It may be as you say; I will make inquiry. Though my parishioners be as lawless as you suggest, they will not resist my authority."

The pistol clicked ominously.

"Sir, by your own admission they have hoodwinked you for years, and they may again, nor can I forgo the pleasure of your company even for a space. Yet it is too early to set about my further business, and, frankly spoken, my arm grows weary. Let us call a truce for the hour or two which must elapse before my men—and yours—can be in their places? Give me your word of honour not to leave this room or to communicate with any one entering it, and I am once more your obedient servant."

"And my guest! You speak of honour,

and violate its principle!"

"In the King's service one pockets punctiliousness. Your word?"

The Rector cogitated a few seconds, then

he broke into a resounding laugh.

"One must forgive something to youthful zeal. 'Twill be matter for a jest how the parson was cozened by a hint of romance.

Yet this violence is wholly unnecessary: you have mistaken your man, but since you ask my parole I give it."

The exciseman lowered his weapon.

occasioned a tragedy. And now, sir, do not let my disclosure spoil the after-dinner

The Rector reached out for the brandy



"And in good time," he remarked pleasantly, "it were pity had numbed muscles

and passed the bottle across the table, but the officer had turned his glass upside down.

"Parson, Parson," he said reproachfully, to talk, and it must be admitted that the this is not worthy your intelligence. Your Rector of Motcombe made excellent company.



liquor is excellent, too excellent for one who may need to keep his fingers steady."

Parson Trencombe emptied his own glass, filled it and drained it again; then he began The stories he told lacked nothing in wit, though they might in edification. One, indeed, was so strong that the younger man interrupted it with an expostulatory oath.

Parson Trencombe raised his eyebrows.

"You forget my cloth."

"Faith, sir, you seem in more danger of forgetting it yourself. The hour, at any rate, your company has made me forget. Come, it is time we were moving."

" We ? "

The Revenue man's hand slipped to his belt.

"Aye. Our truce is up, but this little friend of mine here may spare me the pain of a sudden separation. These gentle sheep of yours are said to have so childlike a dread of the dark that they will not beach in the cove until they see a light in their parish church."

The betrayal was then complete!

Parson Trencombe's harsh voice was not quite steady as he answered:

"I cannot pretend to guess your meaning, and your plans do not concern me. My hospitality and your business with me end

here."

"And I am to leave you to make your way to the village! Who knows but the shepherd's tenderness for the flock—on which I heard you discourse so movingly this morning—might blunt his devotion to the King's service? I will be plain with you. I dared not detach more than one man to obtain the church keys, which I perceive you have about your person, and so, since it takes a gentleman to conduct the interview which I have so much enjoyed, I had to come myself. Let us start, in the King's name."

The Rector was in two minds whether to throw himself upon the fellow, trusting to his superior weight, but the odds against an unarmed man were too great. In the end he spoke with more dignity than might have been expected.

"The house of God committed to my charge shall not be used for your purpose.

I appeal to the law of the land."

"Aye, Parson, appeal to-morrow, if you care to publish the pretty story, but this is to-day. And so—march!"

They passed out into the hall, dimly lit by a horn lamp, for which the exciseman

reached with his free hand.

"A thoughtful maid, Parson, as one might expect from her skill in dressing a dish. I am told we shall find a lantern in the belfry, but it is wise to provide against accidents. Go you before me," he added sternly, "and remember that if you speak to a soul or attempt flight you are a dead man."

The air struck cold after the parlour,

heavy with the fumes of spirits and tobacco; there was little moon, though the chalk road showed distinctly enough. Both men had their reasons for listening intently, but no sound broke the stillness until they were in the churchyard.

"It is the part of the shepherd to unlock the entrance to the fold. I count one hundred, and if by then the door is not

open I fire."

The Rector had anticipated some such words. The heavy keys might have formed a weapon, or he might have flung them out of reach, trusting to darkness or to luck to keep them hidden, but he had not quite reckoned on the effect of a pistol muzzle against one's head, nor, perhaps, on the hypnotism exercised by a voice counting regularly, imperturbably.

Gratingly the key turned in the lock and

the heavy door swung inwards.

Together they mounted the winding stairs, the officer a step behind, with raised arm, until they entered the belfry, where he set the light he carried in the deep unglazed embrasure, and then stood with his back against the wall, his weapon lowered but held ready.

"I was not misinformed; I see there is a second lantern, but yours will serve our turn. We are somewhat early, but better that than too late. 'Tis an ill fate that keeps us both where we shall scarce hear more than a stray shot, but they who watch in the King's service deserve as much as they who fight."

The Rector stood with head bent. Since his own hand had turned the key, he had become outwardly and, were such a thing possible after a life like his, also inwardly a shamed man. He was, perhaps, not the

less dangerous.

Already the lugger must be nearing the coast, the tide running sweetly for the landing, and the light from the tower lulling the men into security. "Parson's Eye" they called it, and it had never failed them yet. Quite unbidden and unwelcome, that day's text flashed into his mind: "The hireling fleeth." It was, unluckily, no question of fleeing; the shepherd skulked there, a coward, and had dared nothing.

He made a spring forward, not at the exciseman who might be expecting an attack but at the great tenor bell in the centre of the belfry. In a second he had swarmed up the rope and hung on to the clapper, his legs drawn close up under him. He was to all intents in a suit of armour;

only someone directly beneath him could have fired to any purpose; and the bell swung violently to and fro as though resenting his presence.

He leapt to the floor, landing by the open door, and the released rope lashed out as he had calculated. Luck was against him: instead of catching the officer round the throat or at least lifting him off his feet, it merely pushed him against the window, not even knocking the pistol out of his hand. Even the lantern was still guarded, and, seeing this, Parson Trencombe took the only course left to him, which was to make his escape through the belfry door.

Down the stairs he hurled himself, hearing in imagination, even before he heard it in reality, the sound of pursuit. His knowledge of the steps, worn and broken in places, stood him friend, and he had clapped the door to and once more turned the key before his opponent was near enough to fire.

Safe at any rate for the moment, he considered the situation. The best chance was undoubtedly to collect what men were still on shore and leave them to deal with the prisoner in the tower. Into their methods he need not inquire: dead men tell no tales, and it was one life against many. A sweet scheme, and he relinquished it unwillingly; but it had the cardinal defect of needing time, and all the while Parson's Eye was shining out its treacherous message.

Up to now he had not actually compromised himself in the eyes of the law, and it may be that he remembered with regret his snug rectory and the pleasures which even a clerical life had allowed him. He made his way to the south wall of his church, and felt into the thickness of the ivy. Only the week before he had climbed the nave roof in pursuit of a miscreant after the lead. The darkness made the task only a little more difficult, and he ran swiftly along the roof to the angle of the tower.

He knew that here, too, the bolder boys had gone in quest of jackdaw nests, and he suspected their supports had been the footholes left for scaffolding poles, when, as so often happened, the salt-laden breezes made repairs necessary, but he had never trusted his own weight so far above the ground.

He climbed with cat-like caution. The tower was fonly squat, and the ivy stems firm as iron. Once, indeed, a big bird flew out, provoking him to wonder whether the Revenue man would know that even an owl does not make a sudden flight without cause given. But perhaps he had not heard

her. He might still be waiting with his pistol by the door.

The Rector gathered breath and twisted his hand more firmly in the ivy. Level with him now was the steady beam of the lantern; overhead shone the clean stars, looking down on him as they looked down on the deck of the lugger, where the barrels must be ready for unlading.

The window-opening widened outwards and the lantern had been set fairly far out on the ledge so that, though the Rector hung precariously from the tower by one hand, the other with the keys in it met the glass fair and true.

There was a crash of glass and a reek of oil as the lamp fell down on to the earth. Parson's Eye had closed!

Parson himself was safe back behind the angle of the tower, but round and beneath him a whole crowd of birds were now circling, almost blinding him and deafening him to everything but their harsh cries. It maddened him that he could hear nothing else. His whole being was keyed up to ascertain whether the exciseman had returned to the belfry; if he had not, there might yet be a chance.

The birds were settling again to rest, and he swung himself a little nearer. Yes, there was a sound now within the tower. A small rasping sound such as a man might make with a tinder-box, surely a little thing to mean all the difference between life and death.

The fellow had returned from the stairs then, and he had not forgotten that cursed second lantern. It was like his preciseness to have provided himself with the means of rekindling the flame. But he was very slow, it appeared.

A sweat which was not the result of his climb stood on the Rector's brow. Parson's Eye had been accidentally extinguished and relighted before now, but never, surely, after so long an interval. Men living on the edge of peril would scent treachery and tack about, even if the light danced out again. But would they, would they?

It infuriated him that he could not think clearly; he could not even feel assured which of the gang were there. Instead, all sorts of irrelevant matters crowded upon his brain. That miserable text of his, now: "The hireling fleeth."

It was as though someone outside himself were repeating it to him, forcing him to attend to something he could not understand, but which certainly went further back than the afternoon's sermon. He had no desire to drag it out of forgotten memories, but his brain would not let it rest.

All at once he remembered. Of course. the words had formed part of the Gospel of his "priesting." He had hardly recalled the occasion since; it had been the final riveting of chains which galled none the less that they were gilded. But, hanging now between earth and sky, the whole scene came whimsically before him. He could even hear the

gospeller's voice with its mincing academic twang. The door—the hireling -the shepherd. Other words, too, there had been about a given life—a life laid down These at least he

He had disgraced his cloth as he had disgraced his family, but there was a blasphemy from which his seared soul could vet shrink.

Quite suddenly the light shone out again from the belfry, and with it the uncertainty cleared from his mind.

The second lantern was placed much closer within the window. To reach it one must fling oneself forward so that one lighted with knees and hands on the ledge. A target which not even a bungler could miss.

His right hand went forward.

The crash of the glass and the report of the pistol rang out-together; they were followed by the thud of a heavy body.

Parson's Eye would not open again.



"The crash of the glass and the report of the pistol rang out-together; they were followed by the thud of a heavy body."



## THE DEAD BEAT

### By V. BLASCO IBANEZ

One of the last stories penned by the brilliant Author of "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ABBEY

"ERE is the notice," said Perez, laying down his newspaper, "of the death of a friend of mine. I saw him only once, but he has been often in my thoughts. A fine man, he was!

"It was on the night train from Valencia to Madrid that we met. I was in a first-class compartment, and its only other occupant got off at Albacete. I was not sorry to be alone, for I could stretch out as much as I pleased, and the cushions looked very inviting. And so, confident that I should sleep like a log, I put out the light, threw my overcoat over me, and settled down full length with a sigh of relief that there was no one there to be bothered by my feet.

"The train was crossing the great plains of La Mancha. The engine was pulling at top speed, and the car groaned and jolted like an old stage-coach. The continual lurching kept me swaying back and forth on my shoulder, the suitcase was jiggling overhead, the windows were rattling, and a terrible screeching of steel came from the wheels and brakes. But as soon as I closed my eyes I began to succumb to the rhythm and imagine myself back in childhood, lulled to sleep by the low voice of my nurse.

"Lost in these foolish fancies, I fell asleep, with the steady noise in my ears and the

train never stopping.

"Suddenly a change in the air wakened me. A cold wind was blowing across my face. Opening my eyes, I found the compartment still empty and the door in front of me still closed. I was just drowsing off

again when I felt another blast of chill night air, and starting up saw that the door by my head was wide open and that there was a man sitting on the floor with his feet out

on the steps.

"I was too startled to think; my brain was only half awake. My first sensation was one of superstitious terror. A man suddenly appearing there, with the train going at full speed, could be nothing less than a ghost. Then I thought of train robbers,

hold-ups, murders, and I realised that I was alone, without any way of warning even those sleeping on the same side of the wooden partition. The man, of course, was a bandit!

"Impelled by the instinct of self-defence, I threw myself upon the creature, pushing against him with my elbows and knees; he lost his balance but clung to the edge of the door desperately, while I went on pushing, trying to weaken his grip and to shove him out. Certainly I had the advantage of the situation.

"'For God's sake, leave me alone! I won't hurt you!' he gasped so meekly that I was ashamed of my behaviour and obeyed. He sat down again, panting and trembling, while I turned on the light.

"Then I saw what he looked like. He was a peasant, of rather slight build, dressed in an old leather jacket and faded breeches. His black cap was not much darker than his swarthy face, which set off a pair of huge staring eyes and a broken set of vellow teeth.

"The latter he was exposing in a broad grin of stupid gratitude, but at the same time he was fumbling in his sash—a detail that made me regret my generosity; so that while he was still searching I put my hand to my hip pocket and felt for my revolver. He was not going to catch me unawares!

"Slowly the man pulled something from his sash, and I imitated him, drawing my

revolver half-way out of my pocket. But what he produced was merely a little scrap of crumpled paper, which he held out to me in triumph.

"'See, I've got a ticket.'
"I looked at it and laughed.

"'But it's an old one!' I said. 'It hasn't been good for years. And besides, does that excuse you jumping on trains and frightening people in this way?'

"At that he turned pale, as if he were



actually afraid I would try again to throw him off; but, nervous as I was, I was beginning to feel sorry for the fellow.

"You might as well come inside and

shut the door.'

"'No, thanks!' he said firmly. 'I haven't the right to ride in there; I'll stay out here. I have no money!'

"And he stubbornly kept to his seat in the doorway. I was sitting just beside him, my knees touching his shoulders. The wind was coming in like a hurricane as we sped along, and across the face of the barren plain skimmed a little patch of light from the open door, with our huddled shadows in it. Telegraph poles slipped by like yellow pencil strokes on the black curtain of night, and firefly sparks kept flying back from the engine.

"The poor fellow seemed restless, as though he were not used to sitting long



"Slowly the man pulled something from his sash."

unmolested. I offered him a cigar, and after a time we fell to talking.

"He told me that he had been making this same trip every Saturday. He waited for the train outside of Albacete, made a running leap for the steps, and then sneaked along the plank until he found a vacant compartment. Just before getting into a station, he would jump off the train, and then hop on again after it had started,

always trying to get on a different car so as to escape the notice of hard-hearted trainmen.

"'But where are you bound for?' I asked. 'And why do you take such a risk every week?'

"It seemed he wanted to spend Sundays with his family. He and his wife were too poor to live together; she worked in one town, he in another. At first he used to

make the journey on foot, walking all night long, but when he got there he would have to lie down exhausted, too weak to talk to his wife or to play with the children. By and by he grew desperate, and found an easier way to get there. Just seeing his children gave him strength to work hard all the rest of the week. He had three babies: the youngest was not old enough to walk yet, but she knew him and threw out her arms for a kiss whenever he came.

"' But don't you realise that one of these trips may be your last?' I asked.

"He smiled confidently. No, he was not afraid of the train as it came rushing towards him like a wild horse, puffing and blowing sparks. He had plenty of nerve: one leap, and there he was; and as for getting off, well, he might get a hump now and then, but he managed to keep clear of the wheels.

"His only fear was the passengers. Of course, a first-class car was apt to have empty compart-

ments, but such narrow escapes as he had had! Once he got into a place reserved for ladies where there were two nuns, and their screams gave him such a scare that he dropped off and had to go the rest of the way on foot.

"One night, as he was stealthily opening a door, someone knocked him over the head and pitched him off. He certainly thought that was his last trip! "As he spoke he pointed to a huge scar across his forehead.

"Yes, he got rough treatment, but he did not complain; he could not blame people for being frightened and trying to defend themselves. He deserved all he got, and more; but how could he help it, when he had no money and wanted to see his children?

"Just then the train began to slow down, as if we were coming to a station. He stood

up in dismay.

"" See here, I said. 'There is another stop before we get to your station and I'll

pay your fare for you!'

""'No, sir,' he replied candidly. 'The guard would get me going through the gate. He has never had a good look at me, and I don't mean to let him. But I wish you a pleasant trip, sir. You are the kindest man I've ever met!'

"And with that he went down the steps

and disappeared along the plank.

"Pretty soon we stopped at a small station. I was about to have another nap, when all at once I heard excited voices on the platform. It was the train crew and the station porters directing the Guardia Civil in hot pursuit of someone.

"'There he goes! One of you on the other side, so he can't get away! ... Now he's up on top of the car! ... Hurry!'

"And in a few seconds the roof above me was shaking under the heavy feet of the frantic police.

"I leaned out of my window just in time to see a man hurl himself from the roof of the car ahead. He landed in a heap, crept some distance on hands and feet, and then began to run at break-neck speed, soon lost in the cover of night.

"Meanwhile the conductor and the others were arguing and waving their hands

excitedly.

"' What's the matter?' I inquired of one

of them

"'It's that fellow again who is all the time stealing rides,' he informed me. 'He is the parasite of the railroad! He's a dead beat, that's what he is! But we'll get him

yet!'

"I never saw the 'dead beat' again. Often on winter nights I have wondered whether he were standing out in the blinding snow or rain somewhere, waiting for the unfriendly train to come along, and then stepping on with all the nonchalance of a

soldier taking a trench.

"And here it says," ended Perez, pointing to his newspaper, "that a mangled body has been found on the track near Albacete. It's he—no need of identification to convince me. 'He that seeketh danger shall perish in it.' For four long years he must have kept it up, hunted like a wild animal every time he wanted to kiss his little ones, until at last pitiless daylight found him lying on the track, where black night had so often seen him challenge death with the coolness of a hero."

#### FEELING LONELY.

A LITTLE whimper, next a patient sigh,
And then a sniff (Oh dear, there's no reply!)
A little patter on the landing floor,
A gentle scratching at my study door,
Another pause, and then—"Well, who is that?"
The door swings open, there upon the mat
He stands expectant—"Please it's only me.
There's nobody downstairs; I thought I'd see
If you were lonely too. Please, may I stay?
I promise you I won't be in the way."
Then at your feet contentedly he lies,
A world's devotion in two doggy eyes.

J. WALKER.

# THE TRUTH ABOUT HOLLYWOOD

#### By HAROLD J. SHEPSTONE.

RECENTLY spent several weeks in Los Angeles, the greater part of the time occupied in studying conditions at Hollywood.

With its beautiful sunny climate and unique setting among the mountains, the film capital fascinated me as she does all visitors. She has an atmosphere of her own, and is inclined to be a little aloof and independent, though hospitality itself to the

stranger within her gates. She is first and foremost a city of beautiful homes, of stately public buildings, fine schools and churches, ornate cinemas and novel outdoor places of entertainment.

How Hollywood derived its name and how the "movies" came and in a twinkling as it were transformed a quiet, ranching community into a world-renowned centre, is a romance in itself. The film city lies in

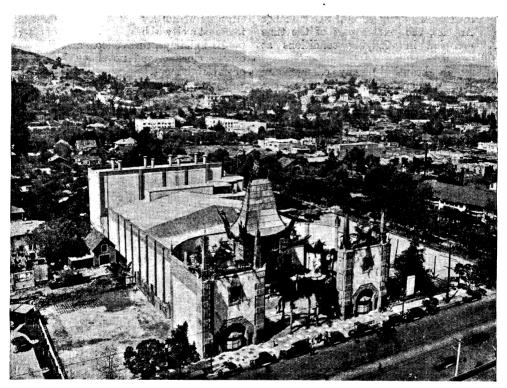


AN ITALIAN GARDEN AT HOLLYWOOD.

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the crook of a mountain elbow formed by the Santa Monica range, one of the most picturesque valleys in all California. Thus we have a city rising from the level plains up the steep sides of the surrounding mountains—a most picturesque setting. On these hills, the slopes of which are scored with paved avenues lined with palm and pepper trees, are the palatial residences of the film stars and of the wealthy business men of Los Angeles, and along its spacious boulevards, served by electric trams and 'buses, are the great studios, banks, business houses.

a site which to-day could hardly be bought for love or money. Cahuenga was the name suggested by her family, but Mrs. Wilcox insisted upon Hollywood. She had recently returned from a visit to the Middle States, where one of her friends had spoken of their country home as Hollywood. The name pleased Mrs. Wilcox, and she remembered that the Indians and passers-by in the valley invariably referred to the cross in the pass that leads over the mountains into Hollywood, and which the Spanish missionaries had erected and where Mass was said, as the



THE CHINESE THEATRE AT HOLLYWOOD.

Built at a cost of £600,000, and one of the most ornate in the world.

hotels, theatres, restaurants and shops. It was a lady, Mrs. Wilcox, the wife of a rancher, who gave Hollywood its name. She and her husband moved into the valley some forty-six years ago, secured a tract of land, and began the cultivation of apricots and figs. At that time the place was known as the Valley of the Cahuengas, after a tribe of Indians, who sojourned in the mountains. Mrs. Wilcox was asked what name should be given to their unpretentious little ranch of 160 acres, which centred on what is now Hollywood Boulevard and Cahuenga Avenue,

Holy Wood of the Cross. Thus Hollywood acquired its name, familiar now throughout the world, from Peru to Pekin, and from Alaska to the Antarctic.

Mr. Wilcox's success as a rancher brought others into the valley and by 1903 the community numbered some 700, devoting their energies principally to the raising of citrus fruits. They were proud of their achievement, and applied for and obtained a charter whereby Hollywood became an independent city, with its own mayor and councillors. It continued to be a community of farms,

orchards and flower-gardens down to 1910. At that time the place had a population of about 10,000 and was proud of its few miles of rough roads and its little stores. Then its citizens voted for annexation to the city of Los Angeles, as the little community of ranchers and farmers did not regard themselves as strong enough financially to undertake to provide the growing population with an efficient water-supply.

If those citizen-farmers could have foreseen the boom that was shortly to come to their little town, they would certainly have on "shooting." As a protest against what they regarded as a foolish and irritating technicality the operators began to migrate westward, among them being Mr. Al Christie, a keen Scotsman, of the then Nestor Film Company.

He and his company came to Los Angeles to locate a likely site for a studio. He left New Jersey with a modest capital of £100, which had dwindled to £10 by the time he reached the Pacific Coast. On arrival, he was taken round by a real estate agent, who pointed out locations at Glendate and Eden-



THE SWIMMING POOL OF A PALATIAL HOLLYWOOD RESIDENCE.

acted differently. The following year, 1911, saw the first motion picture studio housed in Hollywood. Others followed, and it was soon apparent that an important and valuable new industry had been inaugurated.

How the film industry came to Hollywood is another interesting story. Films were at that time being made around New York and in New Jersey by various companies. A powerful patent concern declared that the cameras used were controlled by them, with the result that operators were continually being held up and their machines critically overhauled, and invariably a special fee was demanded before they were permitted to go

dale, both prosperous suburbs of Los Angeles to-day. He also visited Long Beach and Santa Monica, but found no site suitable. Returning one day from the Cahuenga Valley, Mr. Christie noticed a boarded-up inn, the Blondeau Tavern, owned by a brewing company. This he rented at £5 a month, and here the pioneers found a studio home. The stables were converted into dressing-rooms for the actors, the old bar became a carpenter's shop, and a little space which was nominally a garden was transformed into a stage about forty feet square. Mr. Christie was allowed the not very princely sum of £220 a month, for which he



MARY PICKFORD AND DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS TAKE A DIP IN THEIR SWIMMING POOL.

was expected to turn out three films a week. The Christie Film Company still own the site. It has been considerably extended, and covers to-day the width of a whole city block. Last year a tablet was placed in the corner wall calling attention to the fact that this is the spot where films were first made in Hollywood, on October 27th, 1911.

A visit to the various studios is of great interest. They cover an immense area, and some of the more important maintain ranches on the outskirts of the city. The Lasky studio, where the Paramount pictures

are made, covers 26 acres, and gives employment to 1,200 skilled workers, not including the actors and actresses who figure in the films. Over 200 are employed in the carpenter's shop alone, probably the most important department in There are all studios. stages, immense covered buildings, 150 feet wide and 300 to 400 feet in depth, where as many as fifty "sets" can be set up and worked at the same time. In the grounds I saw a wonderful and really artistic representation of a part of Venice, with real water gondolas and canals, Venetian houses and

dwellings. Close by was a street scene in Chicago, and near this again a typical English village.

Over the entrances to all the studios one reads the sign: "Strictly Private. No Passes Allowed." You know that pictures are being taken behind those walls, but, whoever you are, you must wait until they are "released" before you can The many see them. people who come to Hollywood to see how the pictures are made only meet with disappointment. The promoters are stern business men and do not wish

to be disturbed in their work. The Chamber of Commerce endeavour to meet the difficulty by showing a special film every morning, depicting the rapid growth of Hollywood, followed by scenes showing how films are made.

Apart from the exterior of the studios, the only evidence of the film business one sees is the occasional presence on a sidewalk of a group of people with a carefully-arranged background, and possibly a costumed girl, a man turning the crank of a camera in her direction, while another man makes the girl do something foolish over



AN OPEN-AIR SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN "IN THE PICTURES."

and over again. Scenes like this attract little attention. Indeed, the percentage of the population of Hollywood actually engaged in the film industry is relatively small, though the nineteen studios and 250 producing companies which are centred here are responsible for 86 per cent of the world's

world the sheer joy and pathos of Chaplin; the ingenuity and good humour of Harold Lloyd; the calm beauty of Lilian Gish; the exuberance and agility of Fairbanks, and the brilliant insolence of Clara Bow, be able to maintain its lead? It is an interesting question, which at the moment is exer-



A WELL-KNOWN CINEMA STAR AT THE DOOR OF HER BEAUTIFUL HOME.

productions. All told, the capital invested in the film industry is close upon £200,000,000. Its importance may be gauged when it is stated that it is the fourth largest industry in the United States, and unique in that it is centred in one spot.

Will Hollywood, which has given the

cising the thoughts of many of our film experts, both British and American.

It was not the lure of sunlight alone that attracted the film makers to California. It surprised me to find whole street scenes being filmed under cover by artificial light in a spot where the sun shines for 345 days

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE AT THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL

out of the 365. The directors of the big studios readily admitted that a high percentage of the filming at Hollywood could, with modern lighting methods, be done equally well in London, or anywhere else for that matter. Often between sixty and seventy per cent of a film which one would have expected to be portrayed in the open air will be taken by artificial light.

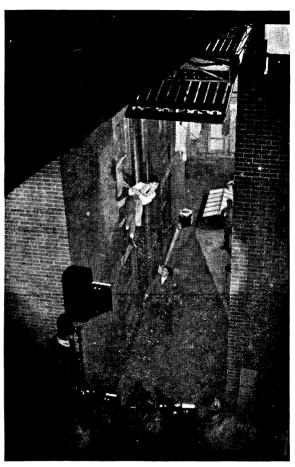
This seems to be wasteful, and indeed the financial waste that goes on at Hollywood is enormous. Not too soon the financiers who back the productions are calling a halt. Big scenes are constructed and never used. Stars, directors and scenarists will be snapped up at princely salaries and kept idle for months, merely to prevent a rival concern from securing their services. Recently, after £45,000 had been spent on a certain film, it was scrapped as hopeless; then a new director and a new leading man were engaged and a new scenario was prepared. The film was then remade at a cost of £25,000, the sum for which it could have been made in the first instance. Hollywood has been too fond of boasting that it takes a year to make a good picture and costs a round million dollars. whereas often the production could be done in half the time and at a quarter of the cost.

The chief complaint against Hollywood is that it so often insists on spoiling a good story by the introduction of scenes and incidents that are irrelevant. The pictorial presentation of many a good novel is absolutely ruined by the introduction of sensational items that have no bearing whatever upon it. The big producers, with an eye on the box office, argue that it is necessary to make

your story "attractive," but it is possible to be attractive without being in the least sensational.

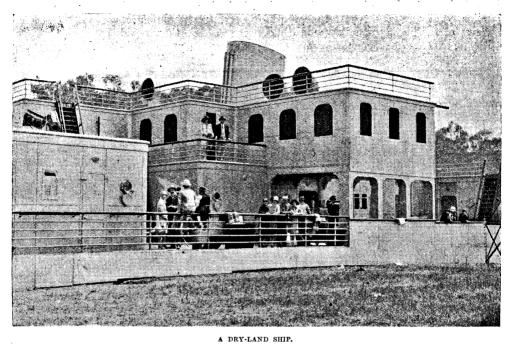
The stranger cannot wander about Hollywood, visiting its studios and chatting with their directors, without discovering that behind all the glamour and prosperity of the city there is tragedy—the problem of the ever-growing army of unemployed who have been attracted by the pictures. There are 20,000 of them, many talented and gifted,

including a good number from the British Isles. There are officers of high rank, bearing names that could be conjured with during the years 1914–1918. All they can hope for now is "crowd" work at thirty shillings a day, and sometimes little of that. Thousands of these "extras" are living on the border-line of starvation. If I were seeking a job in Hollywood to-morrow I

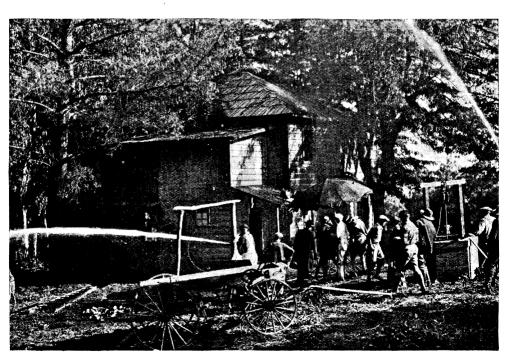


A STUDIO "SET" AS VIEWED BY AN ELECTRIC-LIGHT OPERATOR UP IN THE BAFTERS,

would try to develop some physical disability or train some rare pet to do unheardof tricks. At a friend's house in Hollywood
I met a young man wearing a fine black
beard, and when I expressed surprise he
said he had "grown it for the pictures."
A bald-headed man, a man who limps, or
has some other deformity, or who has a
clever cat or a parrot, is more likely to secure
an engagement than the most talented actor
or actress.



A dummy ship has many advantages from the film-producing point of view over the real thing.



RAIN TO ORDER,

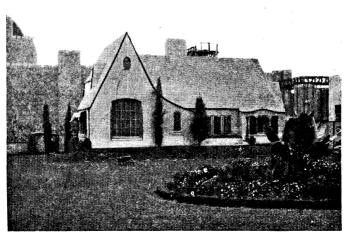
Hollywood's ornate picture palaces are certainly unique. There is the Egyptian Theatre, built in the form of an Egyptian temple and approached through a spacious courtyard lined with columns and obelisks. The latest picture palace is Mr. Sid. Graumann's Chinese Theatre, upon which £600,000 was expended. The exterior has towering minarets of burnished copper, while the ornate and overwhelming splendour of the East is exploited to the full inside. The period is that of the Hsai dynasty, long before the days of Solomon, distinguished for its massive columns and painted ceilings, employing columnar corridors to achieve the effect of spaciousness. Gilt-scaled dragons writhe and twist against a background whose dominant tone is red, ranging from crimson to coral. All the colours and devices of heraldry are utilised, and the gold lanterns set athwart the huge stage are wonders of metalcraft. Even the programme attendants are dressed as Chinese maidens. Here I witnessed the much-discussed film, "The King of Kings." The presentation of the life of our Lord was preceded by high-class musical items, prayer scenes at the Temple in Jerusalem and several Biblical tableaux. During the run of the picture a hidden choir rendered sacred songs and hymns. The quaint Eastern theatre and the accompanying items certainly served to create an "atmosphere" for the story.

In an out-door theatre I witnessed "The Pilgrimage Play," which is presented at Hollywood every summer. The mountain

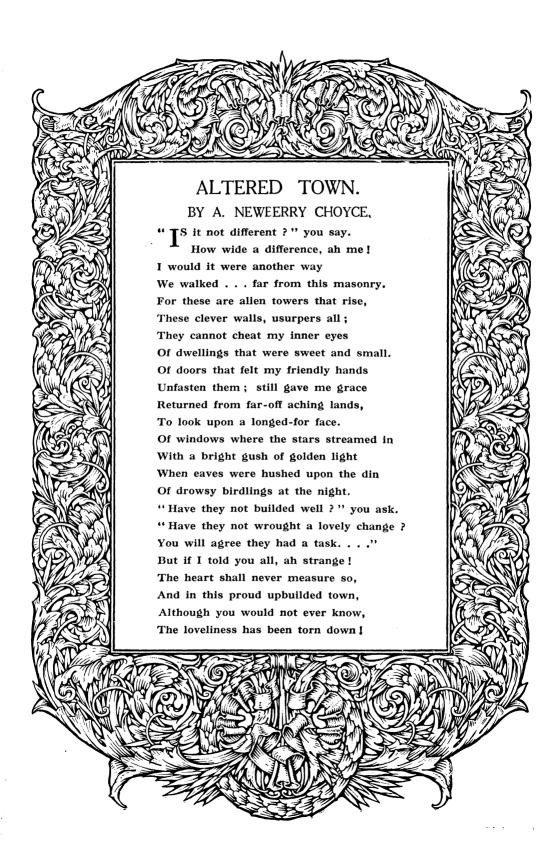
setting where this drama of the life of the Man of Sorrows is enacted is a natural replica of the hills of Judea, and the acting is most reverently done. A stone's throw away is the famous Hollywood Bowl, a vast amphitheatre in the hills, capable of seating 20,000 spectators, where high-class musical concerts and symphonies are given nightly during the summer months. Here, too, every Easter a religious service is held, when all denominations are represented.

Such is Hollywood to-day; but you cannot go among her people without soon learning how deeply they deplore the fact that their city has received so bad a name and a reputation it does not deserve. I mentioned the matter to Mr. W. L. Spellman, the assistant chief of the Los Angeles police department. Not only did he assure me that Hollywood was as law-abiding as any other community, but the records show that so far as legal and criminal offences are concerned Hollywood is one of the most lawabiding cities in the whole of Western America.

True, there have been lapses among certain types in the film concerns, but Hollywood feels that the place as a whole should not be judged by these. The idea that film actors and actresses lead hectic and deplorable lives does not bear investigation. Apart from the assurance by the police, I found that ministers of the churches were emphatic in denunciation of the stigma that has come to be associated with the centre of the film industry.



MARY PICKFORD'S DRESSING-ROOM AT HER STUDIO.



Car & Countryside
Things to see when Motoring



Though so much is being done to spoil our lovely countryside, there are still innumerable objects and places of interest within casy reach of every great city. The following is the first of a series of articles designed to suggest new trains of thought and experience to motorists and others who are willing occasionally to forsake the familiar and often monotonous main and arcerial roals in favour of the oy-ways.

## SUSSEX WINDMILLS

#### By MARY CRANFIELD

**⊙** (With Photographs by the Author) **⊙ ⊙** 

FEW stretches of country hold so much of varied interest as the South Downs. Old churches and castles, Roman camps and villas, widespread views and little thatched and timbered villages nestling in sunny, sheltered hollows, all are to be found for little seeking within the course of an out and home run from London of anything from a hundred to two hundred miles, or at the cost of an omnibus or charabanc ride from places like Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings.

In the matter of roads the motorist can suit his tastes. If speed and ease of going are his objects, there are new wide highways with so perfect a surface that the worst sprung car will hardly produce a bump or shake. Such are some of the many roads that converge on Brighton. But there are also many miles of country lanes, quite sufficiently well made for comfort, though too narrow and winding to attract the crowd.

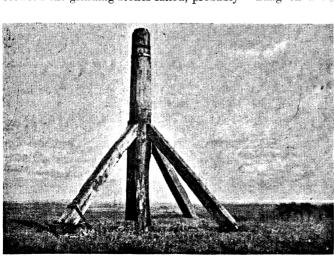
On such roads one can run at leisure for mile after mile with little chance of meeting anything more formidable than a farm cart. It is worth the risk of having to back to find a passing place to have the countryside so completely to oneself.

But whether one goes by lane or broad highway, certain landmarks every now and then arrest the eye, seeming to belong naturally to the open, wind-swept spaces of the Downs. The old English windmills are worth more than the passing glance they usually receive, and probably our own generation is the last that will be familiar with them as features in the landscape. For they are fast disappearing; every year their ranks are thinned, and the veterans that survive the winter's gales grow more and more decrepit.

It is a loss that will never be replaced, for the days are past when beauty and usefulness went hand in hand. No thought that was not strictly practical ever entered into the design of a windmill, yet no artist could have invented anything more beautiful. Perched on some wind-swept hill, with the great sails cutting across the sky and the clouds racing behind them, every practical necessity became part of the mill's beauty.

But the windmill's day is done; not even the free power of the wind can compete with the steam-roller mills of modern days, and in all Sussex there are only two or three that The tall white mill on are still alive. Chailey Common was kept in perfect order, and occasionally the sails turned and did their old work even so recently as January of this year, when a strong gale proved too much for it. Birdham Mill, with its black turret and white canvas-covered sails, still grinds much of the corn grown in that strange flat country between Chichester and the sea; not far from the Downs, but having nothing in common with them but the wind which sweeps over both alike. Baker's Mill, near Barnham, is another of the very few in England in full work to-day. It is strange, after visiting many derelict mills, to see here all the signs of constant work.

To the casual passer-by one windmill is much like another, but in fact they have their own distinctive architecture, and the approximate age of any of them is as easy to read as that of a Norman or an Early English church. Two hundred years seems to be about the limit for any now standing. The wooden construction and the constant danger of fire, if ever the flow of grain between the grinding stones failed, probably



THE POST OF RINGMER MILL, NEAR LEWES.

The mill itself, which was worked during the War, was blown clean off its post a year or two ago.



ASHURST MILL.

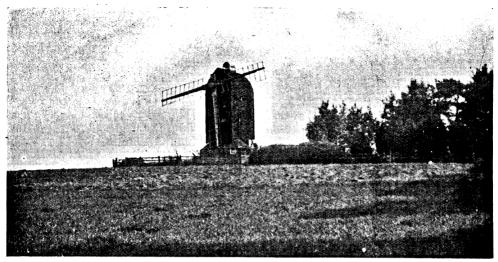
The oldest windmills are those of the "post and socket" type, in which the whole mill was turned by hand according to the wind by means of a timber "tail."

accounted for the destruction of most. It is much if for two hundred years a mill has never once suffered a few minutes' neglect on the part of any of its successive millers: its survival demanded nothing less.

It is by the arrangements made to suit the changing wind that the date is easily told. First in order came the "post and socket" type, in which the whole mill was hung on a fixed central post and entirely

turned by hand by means of a massive timber "tail." Ashurst Mill shows this arrangement most clearly, for here no round house has been built beneath, but the space is left open. The poor old mill leans forlornly on its post; on a windy day one hesitates to go too near, and yet Ashurst has managed to outlive gales which have proved fatal to some of its far weather-beaten less brothers.

Ringmer Mill, a few miles from Lewes, which was in good enough repair to be set to work during the War, was blown clean off its post by a storm a year

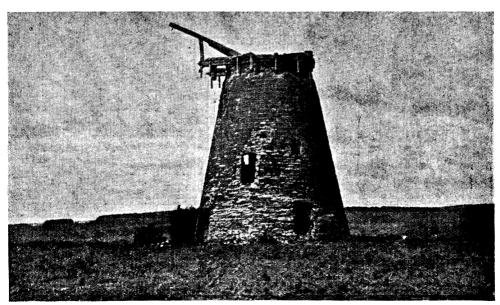


HENFIELD MILL, WHICH HAS LOST ONE OF ITS SWEEPS.

or two ago, and now only the post remains on the hill-top, gaunt and bare against the sky, a landmark for miles round. One unexpected result of this war work was an exciting spy hunt by night over the Downs. Signalling had been clearly seen—regular flashes of a powerful light. When at last the elusive light was located it was found to shine from a window in the side of the old mill, past which the sails travelled as they turned, obscuring and showing the light as regularly as the mechanism of a lighthouse.

At that time every mill in the country that was capable of work was started grinding. It must have been an anxious moment when sails and wheels which had long stood idle and uncared for began, with many creaks and groans, to turn once more. But the new life brought to the old mills by the War did not last. As soon as the pressing need was over the sails again stood idle, and every year the derelicts grow less and less able to withstand the winds which once set them turning so merrily.

Ringmer is not the only Sussex windmill



HALNAKER MILL, NEAR GOODWOOD, ABOVE THE ROMAN STANE STREET.



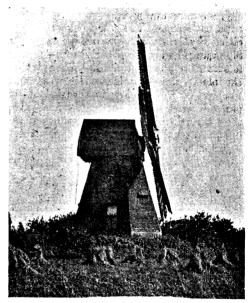
HIGH SALVINGTON MILL.

The first windmill in England to be insured against fire.

the remains of which might well puzzle the passer-by. In a field near the road at Billingshurst stands a roofless octagonal stone building which looks as if it had more in common with some ruined castle than with a windmill. It is, in fact, the stone base of a mill which was blown down in 1906. Over the doorway the date 1825 can still be read. A little house in Pipe's Passage, Lewes, known as the Round House, has a similar history. It is really octagonal, not round, and, like the building at Billingshurst, was originally the base of a windmill. A tablet in the wall recalls its past: "Erected as a windmill 1802—removed to Race Hill about 1835."

On Halnaker Hill, above the Chichester-Petworth road, just where the present road first parts company with the old Roman Stane Street, stand the remains of Halnaker Mill, a round tower faced with red weather tiles of the time of Queen Anne. It is well worth leaving the car in the road and climbing the hill by rough sheep-tracks for the view from the old mill. To the west is Goodwood Park, and the racecourse with the woods and hills around it-more than one Roman camp and burial-ground are in sight if we know where to look for them. On the other side, at the foot of the hill we have climbed, runs Stane Street, straight as an arrow towards the Roman villa at Bignor. From Chichester our road has followed it faithfully, but just here it swerves aside, returning and joining the Roman road again for a few hundred yards before finally leaving it near a farm with the unexpected name of Seabeach.

Ashurst Mill, in spite of its age and infirmities, has preserved the outward signs of a windmill, which is more than can be said for Halnaker, but its tail and ladder are so firmly bedded in the ground that it is difficult to think of them as movable; but at Henfield, a few miles away, the problem is The hunting of windmills in Sussex is well rewarded, if only by the beauty of the country through which one goes to find them, and the road from Ashurst to Henfield is one of the loveliest. Right underneath the Downs it runs; to Stevning first, with its picturesque streets and huge Norman church perched on the side of a hill; on through Bramber, with its castle and its black and white timbered cottages and



SHIREMARK MILL, ON THE BORDERS OF SUBREY AND SUSSEX.

Only the top storey is turned, but this has still to be done by hand.

thatched roofs; bringing us at last on to Henfield Common, with the mill away on the right, looking strangely dwarfed by the loss of its fourth sail.

But what Henfield Mill has not lost, as have nearly all its contemporaries, is the means by which the heavy tail was moved. Here both tail and ladder still keep the wheels on which they were pushed round, and two upstanding wooden horns offer a

firm hold on the tail. The old mill builders were no mean engineers. It was not an easy task to balance the whole weight of the mill, with its sweeps and wheels and millstones, so perfectly on its central post that one man had strength enough to move it. The last miller of High Salvington, just outside Worthing, tells how his small son of twelve used to lean his back against the tail and turn the mill single-handed!

As early as the sixteenth century the Dutch had invented the "smock" mill, with "versatile roof," as it is described by old writers, in which only the top storey to which the sails were fixed needed to be turned, but until well on in the eighteenth century England stuck to the old "post and socket" type. Shiremark Mill, near Kingsfold, on the border-line between Surrey and Sussex, and the great black mill of Rottingdean, on the cliff road between Brighton and Newhaven, are fine examples of this



CHAILET MILL AS IT STOOD UNITE A FEW MONTHS AGO.

The fantail by which the sails of such a mill are automatically turned to meet the wind was invented in 1750 by Andrew Meikle,

date, when the cupola was turned by hand by means of hanging chains.

Probably few of the windmills near the sea have been innocent of a share in the doings of "the Gentlemen" in the old smuggling days—the facilities they offered for hiding contraband were too valuable to be wasted. Rottingdean certainly made the



THE BLACK MILL OF ROTTINGDEAN.

Once a famous haunt of smugglers. An example of the "smock" mill, with the cupola turned by hand.

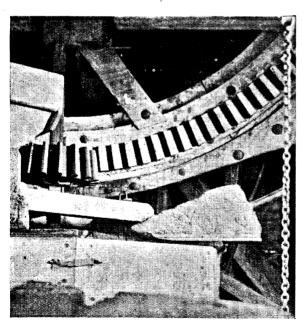
most of its opportunities under its famous smuggling miller, Lot Elphick, who, besides his mill, owned more than one ship employed entirely in "the Fair Trade." The story of Elphick and his foreman, Aylward, is told by Mr. Thurston Hopkins in his Old English Mills and Inns. Aylward was his master's right hand man in all his business, lawful and otherwise, and it was Aylward who devised a system of signals by which the position of the mill's sails kept the ships at sea informed of the whereabouts of the coastguards.

On one occasion, when the mill itself was raided and a fine store of smuggled goods discovered beneath the corn sacks, the miller, who was away visiting a neighbouring parson and advising him about the hanging of his bells, saw from the church tower the sails of his mill set at the point which told that all had been discovered. There was, however, yet time to save himself from hanging, and, by his friend's advice, he paid a hasty visit to the Commissioner in the nearest town to complain of the use made of his mill without his knowledge by certain lawless men, and of his distress of mind at the discovery. The ruse succeeded, and when Aylward was brought in as a prisoner he and his captors found the miller, the parson and the Commissioner sitting round a table in all good fellowship.

It is to be hoped that if Brighton carries out her plan to extend her sea front as far as Rottingdean and engulf it, the old mill at least may be spared. The type represented by Rottingdean and Shiremark was shortlived in England, for in 1750 Andrew Meikle, a Scotch farmer, solved the problem of the wind's changes once and for all. He fixed a small fantail, or "flyer," at the back

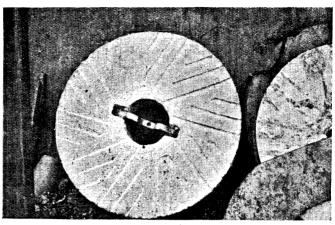
of the cupola, at right angles to the sails, by which the wind did its own work and automatically turned the sweeps according to its own direction. The invention was at once adopted, so that the mere absence of a fantail is enough to date a windmill as earlier than 1750.

The records of English mills go far back in history. In 1190, at Haberdon, in Suffolk, there was a quarrel between "Herbert the dean" and a certain Abbot Sampson, in the course of which a windmill owned by the said Herbert was ordered by the Abbot to



THE GREAT WHEEL OF HIGH SALVINGTON MILL.

Made of oak, beech and hornbeam, with one of the wedges used to raise the millstones for "dressing."



MILLSTONES AT BAKER'S MILL, YAPTON, showing the grooves cut to allow the flour to run out.

be destroyed. Still older records concern the sale of a mill then standing at High Salvington, where a windmill has stood down to the present day. A difficulty arose over the conditions of sale, as it was demanded that the purchaser should not only buy the mill but the miller and his wife, and should pay a fixed price per head for each of their six children!

High Salvington claims to be the oldest windmill now standing, and it is certainly one of the most interesting. It was among the first to be insured against fire, and a

main beam still bears the seal of the Sun Insurance Company with the date 1774—one year after the Company was formed. Fifty years before that the mill is mentioned as in full work. The Insurance Company's seal was no empty formality in those days, for all fire appliances were the property of the various companies; and they were used only for buildings bearing their owner's seal.

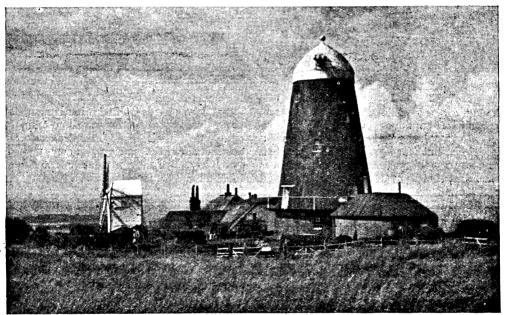
The round house below is now a tea-room, but above, in the mill itself, every wheel and tool is in its place, left as they were when the miller ground his last sack of corn before handing over the mill which he and his father and grandfather had owned and worked. All is kept in working order, and its present owner boasts that it could be started to-morrow.

The oak post on which everything hangs and turns is as sound now as ever, and deep in the ground beneath have been found the roots of a huge tree, showing that a living oak was cut and trimmed as it grew to serve as the post for the new mill. On the floor above is the great wheel, the largest of its kind in England, made of three different woods—oak and beech, with cogs of horn-beam—chosen to compensate and balance each other by their varying contractions.

Beneath the wheel are the wheat stones, made of a fine, hard French flint, bound inside and out with iron, and grooved to allow the flour to run out. The grain flows through a central hole in the upper stone, regulated by the "miller's damsel"—"the miller's troublesome child"—the small

outside a door near the Georgian Hotel at Haslemere is a large round paving stone with grooves, worn by the feet of passers-by, but still clearly marked, and a round hole in the centre partly filled by a square stone. Probably few of the thousands who walk over the stone recognise it for what it is, an upper millstone.

In barns and outhouses, too, they may often be found, either cast aside or else serving some purpose far removed from the one for which they were made. Here, too, occasionally one comes across the stones of the small hand mills, or querns, which were the earliest of all means for grinding corn.



JACK AND JILL ON THE DOWNS ABOVE CLAYTON.

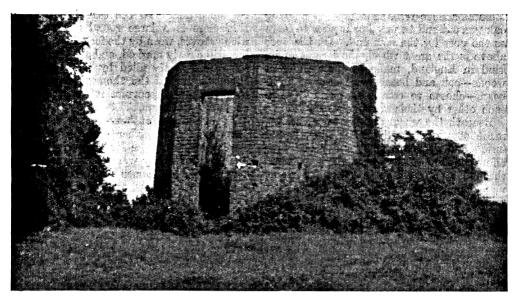
"Jill," the small white mill, was moved from Brighton in 1821, being dragged by a team of oxen.

wooden lever with its string and bobbin, on the pace of whose movement the whole welfare of the mill depends. Never for a minute while the sails turn can the miller afford to forget his "child." By the speed of the knocking sound he knows if the flow of grain is keeping pace with the ever-varying force of the wind. If more grain goes down than the stones can grind, their perfect balance will be destroyed, and untold damage done to the stones themselves and the mechanism; while, if once they grind "dry," nothing can save the mill and its wooden wheels from fire.

Old millstones have been put to many uses up and down the country. In the street

For the encouragement of the new water mills querns were actually forbidden by Scottish law in 1284, but neither English nor Scottish folk have ever taken very kindly to laws which attempted to interfere with their private lives, and people continued to grind corn by hand when it suited them down to very recent times.

Here and there the small upper stone of the hand mill with the hole for pouring in the grain has, like some of the pierced "hammer stones" of prehistoric times, found a strange use. Sometimes in barn or stable one of these will be seen hanging by a cord passed through the centre hole. It seems a far cry from a pierced mill or



BILLINGHURST MILL-ALL THAT IS LEFT OF IT.

hammer stone to a homely cotton reel attached to a bunch of house or church keys, or a "lucky" threepenny-bit with a hole in it, but folk-lore and old superstition link strange things together. The origin is the same, though in the case of the keys and reel the superstition which makes a pierced object a defence against ill luck has been forgotten.

Close to the stones at Salvington still lie the huge wooden wedges used to raise them when the stone-dressers made their periodical visits, and a complete set of dressing tools stands in a corner as if waiting for use. "Dressing," or re-cutting the grooves and correcting any tendency to uneven wear, was a delicate and highly skilled operation, and the dressers travelled from mill to mill. spending at least two days on each pair of stones. A grader for cleaning and sifting the flour is worked off the great wheel by a primitive, but very efficient, arrangement of cog wheels which is put in or out of gear by the movement of a lever, showing that the mill builders understood the principle of gears at least two hundred years ago.

Perhaps the best known of all the Sussex mills are "Jack and Jill," the two which are such a picturesque feature of the Downs above Clayton, on the Brighton road. "Jill," the small white mill, has had an adventurous life. Built originally at Brighton, she was moved in 1821, bodily with all her machinery, to her present place beside "Jack," the big black tower mill. The

attempt was made at first with horses, but the ropes kept breaking, until a team of oxen, with their steady continuous pull, accomplished the journey, slowly indeed, but safely. "Jill" was not the first Brighton mill to go travelling. In 1797 another miller there, in the presence of many thousand spectators, removed his windmill whole and literally as he worked her, with the help of thirty-six yoke of oxen and a number of men, a distance of more than a mile, and re-fixed her without the slightest mishap.

In more than one instance the stories which cluster round our old windmills have long out-lived the mills themselves. Somewhere near Lewes in 1264 stood a windmill which played its part in history. On May 14th, the day of the battle of Lewes, when Henry III was defeated by the Barons, his younger brother, Richard, King of the Romans, fleeing from his enemies after the battle, took refuge in a windmill. His pursuers, finding the door barred, surrounded the mill with cries of: "Come out, you bad miller! You, forsooth, to turn a wretched mill-master; you who defied us all so proudly, and would have no meaner title than King of the Romans—you, called the August!'

The angry barons, in fact, like most people in a temper, took the opportunity to put a good many old grievances into words; when finally they proceeded to deeds, and threatened to burn the mill and the fugitive with it, the Prince surrendered to Sir John Bevis.

The mill was known afterwards as "King Harry's Mill," or the "Mill of the Hide. In a survey of 1618 a windmill is mentioned as standing in the district of "The Hide" in St. Anne's parish, Lewes, near the site of the Black Horse Inn.

A windmill at Winchelsea nearly lost England one of her greatest kings. One day in 1297 Edward I came to the town on the hill to embark for Flanders. As he rode in state up the steep road leading to the citadel, a bend in the way brought the cavalcade in sudden sight and sound of the turning sails of a windmill. The King's horse took fright, and, in his terror, leaped over the bulwarks at the edge of the cliff, disappearing with his rider from the sight of the horror-stricken crowd. Happily the ground was soft, and, to the amazement and delight of all, the King picked himself up at the bottom and rode back through the gate and up the hill, forcing his trembling horse to pass the dreaded mill.

One Sussex miller seems to have been something of a poet, judging by an "Ode to a Windmill" which he left nailed to his mill door, and which is quoted in Old English

Mills and Inns:

- "The windmill is a couris thing Completely built by art of man, To grind the corn for man and beast, That they alike may have a feast.
- "The mill she is built of wood, iron and stone, Therefore she cannot go alone; Therefore to make the mill to go, The wind from some part she must blow.
- "The motison of the mill is swift, The miller must be very swift To jump about and get things ready Or else the mill will soon run empty."



BIRDHAM MILL.

One of the few windmills still working. shows the canvas covering to the sails. are far more common.

The photograph Wooden shutters

The next issue will contain a further interesting article in this series describing some of "Homestead Moats of East Anglia."

## LISTENERS' LUCK

#### By K. R. G. BROWNE

ILLUSTRATED BY CONRAD LEIGH

N the green and white drawing-room of the little house in South Street, Mayfair, young Captain Sheridan, but lately returned from India, was taking tea with Miss Felicity Martineau and Elizabeth, her sister. Through the open window came pleasantly the distant murmur of Park Lane, and the late autumn sunlight glinted cheerfully upon the silver trappings of the feast.

Said Felicity, breaking a longish silence: "Do have another bun, Roger, and keep up your strength."

"I thank you, no," replied Captain Sheridan politely. "I know when to

stop."

Felicity smiled, propped her chin upon her hand and solemnly considered him, the while he gazed back at her with an approval which he endeavoured unsuccessfully to conceal. For Felicity was small and fair and lovely as a June morning, and at all times exceedingly good to look upon; but never more so than now, with the sun in her hair, and on her face that half-pensive, half-mischievous expression that he knew

"I do believe," said Felicity, "he's getting

worried about his figure, Betty."

"I'm not surprised," answered Elizabeth, who was dark and grave-eyed and no less comely than her sister, though in a different fashion. "He's put on a lot of weight while he's been away, don't you think?"

"He certainly seems to—to bulge more

than he used to," said Felicity.

"That's right, my littles," said Captain Sheridan amiably. "Mock me. Exercise your girlish wit. As a matter of fact, I've lost half a stone in the last three months."

"No!" exclaimed Felicity incredulously. "Why, Roger, you must be in love!"

Captain Sheridan looked at her swiftly, and as swiftly looked away again; but he said no word.

"It sounds more like Turkish Baths to me," said Elizabeth, "if it's true, which I doubt.... Well, I'm going out now,

children. Be good." She rose from her chair and smiled kindly upon their guest as he sprang to open the door. "Good-bye, Roger. Come again soon."

As the door closed behind her:

"I'm glad she's gone," said Felicity, "because I want to talk to you privily, Roger. Come and sit down."

"I'm honoured," said Roger, re-occupying

his chair. "Say on."

But Felicity appeared in no hurry to do so. For a full minute she sat silent, gazing abstractedly at the carpet, while Roger watched the play of the sunlight in her hair and thought of this and that.

"You've known me a long time, haven't

you, Roger?" said Felicity suddenly.

"Twenty years, off and on," said Roger. "'And it don't seem a day too much. There ain't a lady livin' in the land as I'd

"And you'd help me if I wanted you to?"

"It's what I'm for."

"I know," said Felicity. "I've always brought you my troubles ever since we were infants in arms, haven't I? But suppose I asked you to do something rather—rather odd?"

"Last time I was home," said Captain Sheridan, flinching at the memory, "you asked me to take you to lunch at a vegetarian restaurant, and I did. I can't imagine anything odder than that."

"But this is different, Roger—and rather serious. I want you to help me to help a
—a girl I know."

"Ah?" said Roger warily. "I'm a bit short of practice as a squire of dames.

However-what's her trouble?"

"Well, there's a man in it," said Felicity; nor did she look at Captain Sheridan as she spoke, but contemplated the empty fireplace. "There generally is, isn't there? They were practically engaged, you see, and then they had a row. The usual silly sort of row, over nothing at all. And she said a lot of things she didn't mean. Idiotic, beastly things, just to hurt—you know. So he walked straight out of the house, and to-morrow he's going to America."

A little silence followed the abrupt conclusion of this melancholy history. Then Captain Sheridan, who had been sitting very still, drew a quick breath and shifted suddenly in his chair.

"This girl," he said, "—do I know

her ? ''

Felicity nodded.

"That's why I want you to help."

"How?" said Roger, in a voice utterly barren of expression.

Felicity turned quickly, leaned forward and

laid a hand upon his arm.

"It's a queer thing to ask, Roger, but I want you to go and see this man for me."

Roger started slightly, frowned and stared at her as if he were seeing her for the first time in his life.

"For you?" he said slowly. "You're right, Felicity—it is a queer thing to ask. Who is the—the fellow?"

"Tony Latimer. You know him, don't

you? I mean, you like him?"

"Tony Latimer!" repeated Roger, as if to himself. "And I never—eh? Oh, I know him all right. Quite a—quite a sound fellow. But I don't quite see why I should

butt in on his affairs, Felicity."

"Why, don't you see," said Felicity, "this girl—she wants him back. Only she's too proud to say so—or too obstinate. Some girls are like that, you know. I—she did telephone him once, but he was out, and she hasn't the nerve to do it again, because she's afraid he may not want to come back—now. And to-morrow he's going to America, and it'll be too late. But if you went to him and told him not to be an idiot—you being a friend of his, you see——"

Captain Sheridan smiled at her, but not

with his eyes.

"Yes," he said, "I see. Cupid's envoy—quite a new line for me. But——"

"You needn't mention any names," said Felicity. "Just say that you happen to know why he's going to America, and that he needn't if he doesn't really want to. That's all."

Another little pause. Then:

"Oh, is that all?" said Roger, rather loudly. And with that he got suddenly out of his chair and went striding across the room to the window, where for a space he stood, motionless as an idol, gazing out into the quiet street. Presently he turned

sharply about and came back to where Felicity sat looking up at him. He spoke in a curt and colourless voice, as if he were anxious only to say what must be said, and have done with it.

"Sorry, Felicity, but it can't be done. I—I haven't time. I've an appointment at six that'll keep me all the evening."

"Oh," said Felicity, and was silent for a little. "You can't spare even half an hour, Roger?"

Roger looked away from her, and his expression was that of one in great discomfort of mind.

"No," he said. "I'm sorry."

"Oh, well," said Felicity very brightly, "it can't be helped, I suppose. Perhaps I can think of some other way of—arranging things. I'm sorry I bothered you about it, Roger."

"No bother at all," returned Captain Sheridan, intensely polite. "Sorry I can't help.... Jove, it's a quarter to six! I must be moving, I'm afraid. So long,

Felicity."

"So long, Roger," said Felicity.

Captain Sheridan hesitated, seemed about to speak, changed his mind, and bowed stiffly from the waist. Then he turned on his heel, marched to the door, passed through, closed it carefully behind him, gathered up his hat and stick from the hall table, and let himself out into the street. On the pavement he lingered for a moment, tugging his moustache; then he swung to the right and at a great pace made off towards Hyde Park.

In one having, by his own admission, an appointment in rather less than a quarter of an hour, the subsequent behaviour of Captain Sheridan was somewhat peculiar. For when, having crossed Park Lane in a headlong manner that might well have brought about his death, he came by one of the smaller gates into that spacious pleasaunce where all London takes the air on fine evenings in autumn, he paused, looked vaguely this way and that, remarked a green chair standing solitary beneath a mighty tree, approached it and sat down. And there for a considerable period he continued to sit, tracing futile arabesques with his stick upon the gravel and absorbed in reflections which, to judge by his expression, were not of the most cheerful. The sunlight faded, and the dusk came down; lights sprang up about the Marble Arch, and the Londoners began by twos and threes and families to drift homeward; and

still Captain Sheridan sat on his hard green chair under the tree, prodding the gravel with his stick and frowning into space. For Captain Sheridan's hitherto pleasant and well-ordered world had gone suddenly all "Sparrow," said Roger, "it's a rotten

To this the sparrow had nothing to say. "Just my luck," said Roger, "that she should pick on me. Me, of all people!"



"For a space he stood, motionless as an idol, gazing out into the quiet street."

awry, and he felt more than a little dazed. Something of this he confided presently to a sparrow which, gaining confidence from his immobility, came to earth within a yard of his foot and began industriously to forage in the gravel.

The sparrow foraged on.
"There's not much," said Roger, "I wouldn't do for her, but there's a limit, sparrow."

The sparrow did not deny it.

"She must know," said Roger, "how I

feel about her. Then why pick on me for the job? That wasn't kind, sparrow."

The sparrow dissembled its interest, if any. And after an appreciable interval: All the same," said Roger, "I'm letting

her down, in a way, curse it. If he's going to America to-morrow, and she really wants-" His voice faltered and died

himself from his chair, and went away at a high speed in the direction of Piccadilly. The sparrow, annoyed, but not-being a London sparrow—particularly alarmed, took to the air and sought new hunting grounds.

Of all the little sombre streets that lie hid between St. James's Square and Jermyn Street, the smallest and the most gloomy is Clinton Street, which is no more than

> ing the high blank wall of an antique-furniture warehouse. Captain Sheridan, when

in the course of time he turned in at

the western end of this insignificant thoroughfare, thought that he had never seen a street so de pressing, so melancholy, so completely dead; but that may well have been because his frame of mind at the moment was such that he would have discerned no charm in the Tai

Mahalitself. Walking rapidly, and with the grimly purposeful air of one bent upon an ungrateful mission. he came to the door of Number 6, mounted three gleaming steps,

pushed open the door with an ungentle hand, crossed the little dark hall and went up the narrow stairs at a speed that testified alike to his physical condition and to his eagerness to discharge his errand and be gone. On the topmost landing he paused at a door to which was affixed a visiting-



away, and for perhaps twenty seconds thereafter he sat extremely still and silent, so that the sparrow was emboldened to advance upon a crumb that lay between his very feet. But the crumb was never harvested, for on a sudden Captain Sheridan swore aloud and very heartily, uncoiled card informing all whom it concerned that Mr. A. J. C. Latimer abode within. This door stood ajar, and Roger, thrusting at it with his foot, cried into the gloom beyond:

"Hey, Tony!"

No reply being forthcoming, he crossed the threshold and entered a room of unexpected size, furnished in the adequate but uninspiring fashion common to bachelor quarters in that expensively masculine corner of St. James's. Here lights were burning, but there was no person visible, nor any sound of movement to be heard. For a moment Roger hovered in the doorway, noting the half-filled trunk upon the floor, the articles of apparel that littered the table—tokens that the tenant of this room was meditating a journey at no very distant date.

"Tony!" he called again, and stood listening. None answering him, he advanced into the room and began to wander aimlessly about, idly examining here a book and there a photograph, and all the time wearing an impatient little frown. Arrived at the window, he pulled aside the curtains, opened it and stepped out upon a small balcony that existed rather for ornament than for use. And here for a time he remained, leaning against the wall and staring out over the dim huddle of roofs which is all that Clinton Street can offer in the way of a view. Presently he moved restlessly, sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and turned to re-enter the room. But even as he laid his hand upon the window it was pulled open from within and somebody emerged upon the balcony beside him.

"Great Scott!" said Captain Sheridan,

taken all aback.

"Roger!" exclaimed the new-comer, in a startled voice. "Goodness, how you made me jump!"

"The same to you, Felicity," said Captain

Sheridan.

The window swung shut with a faint clatter as Felicity moved forward and leaned against the rail of the balcony. In the gentle light that filtered through the curtains she seemed to Roger even more desirable than usual, if that were possible, which he was not prepared to admit.

"Now what in the world," she said, " are

you doing here, Roger?"

"I came," answered Roger, "to deliver your message."

"But—your appointment?"

"That doesn't matter," said Roger, coughing. He looked out over the roof-

tops, adding: "You're here for the same reason, I take it."

Felicity nodded.

"When you said you couldn't help, there was nothing for it but to come myself. Rather courageous of me, don't you think? But where's Tony? I found all the doors open, so I walked in."

"Tony," said Roger, in a flat sort of voice, "appears to be out. But I expect he'll be back shortly, as he left his door

open. So I'd better be shifting."

"Why?" said Felicity.

Roger stared at her.

"Why? My dear girl, this is no place for me. You can give him that—that message of yours much better than I can."

"Possibly," said Felicity. "But oughtn't you to stay as my chaperon, Roger? I mean, this is very forward and reckless of me, isn't it—breaking into a gentleman's rooms like this?"

"This is the twentieth century," returned Roger coldly. "There are no rules now-adays, are there? I haven't noticed any since I've been home. So I'll be going, Felicity. Good luck, and——"

But Felicity moved sideways, barring his

way to the window.

"What's the matter, Roger?" she asked.
"You sound sort of—sort of peevish."

"Touch of liver, no doubt," said Roger

distantly.

"You know," observed Felicity unexpectedly, "what you want, Roger, is a wife. I've thought so for a long time. Only you're not a marrying man, are you?"

"No," said Roger. "Not now."

"You mean you were once?"
"Oh, yes," said Roger carelessly. "Look here, I must——"

"What made you change your mind?"

"It was changed for me," said Roger.
"Oh!" said Felicity, and drew back a ittle. "Somebody in India, Roger?"

"Look here," said Roger, speaking very quickly, "I want to get out of this before Tony comes back, so—so—what the dickens

is the matter with the thing?"

For while he spoke he had been pushing at the window, with intent to open it; pushing at first lightly, then vigorously, and finally with something akin to desperation. But all to no purpose. The window creaked under his onslaught, but yielded not one centimetre; for which obstinacy Captain Sheridan, by flattening his nose against the pane and squinting downward, very shortly discovered the reason.

"Good Lord!" he said, aghast. "We're locked out!"

"Locked out?" echoed Felicity. "Non-

sense, Roger! Who did it?"

"You did. When you slammed the window just now, the latch jerked over and got caught. There's no handle on this side, so we can't get in."

Felicity received this information with

commendable composure.

"Oh, how jolly, Roger! I love being marooned on other people's balconies—it's so original... Roger, be careful! What are you doing?"

"Looking for a wayfarer," explained Roger, leaning far out over the railing. "If I can get somebody to come up and

open---'

"You'll do no such thing," stated Felicity positively. "Tony will be back in a minute, won't he? What will he say if we call in strange wayfarers to tramp all over his rooms? And you're being rather rude, Roger. Is my society so repulsive that you can't wait—"

"I've told you," said Roger savagely, "I want to get away before Tony—what was that?" He sprang suddenly forward, applied an eye to the narrow opening left by the fall of the curtain, and in a restrained voice announced: "There's somebody in the room."

"Tony?" queried Felicity.

"No. It's—it's a woman."

Felicity gave a little gasp.

"A woman? Oh, Roger, no!" And without apology she elbowed him aside and usurped his vantage-point. "I can't see anything. She's moved away. Roger, who is she?"

"I don't know," said Roger uncomfortably. "I only saw her back for a second. She's got a black hat on. The charwoman, probably, or—or Tony's sister, or somebody."

"Did she look like a charwoman?"

"Well—no," admitted Roger reluctantly. "But——"

"And Tony hasn't any sisters."

"I'm sorry, old girl," said Roger, not knowing what else to say. His hand went out in the darkness, found Felicity's, and crushed it consolingly.

"Oh, dear!" said Felicity, and her voice quivered slightly. "That's torn it, Roger, I'm afraid. . . . Well, it can't be helped.

What shall we do now?"

Roger stared blankly at the window and tugged his moustache in the manner of one

seeking inspiration and finding none. Suddenly he started, went quickly to the railing and peered down into the abyss of the street.

"Somebody coming," he announced. "I believe—wait till he gets under the lamp—yes, it's Tony! If I give him a hail——"

"No!" said Felicity, abruptly and urgently. Her strong young hand took him by the shoulder and jerked him back. "Keep quiet, Roger!"

" But—"

"I want to hear!" said Felicity fiercely.
"I must hear—don't you see?"

"But, dash it all, we can't stay-"

"I want to know who that woman is, Roger, and I'm going to find out! I want to know what Tony—there he is!"

Through the open fanlight above the window there was borne to them, faint yet distinct, the sound of heavy steps crossing the landing towards the door of the room. There followed the rattle of the door-handle, and then a loud exclamation in an astonished masculine voice.

"What the-Betty!"

"Hullo, Tony," said another voice. "I found your door open, so I came in."

Out on the balcony the unsuspected eavesdroppers started with one accord and turned to stare at one another; but whereas the ingenuous countenance of Captain Sheridan was a picture of incredulous bewilderment, Felicity's expression betokened only an immeasurable relief.

"Oh, good for you, Bet!" she said very softly.

Through the fanlight came the voice of Mr. Latimer:

"I—I've just been trying to ring you up, Betty—the 'phone's out of order here—but they said you weren't at home, so——"

And the voice of his visitor:

"If I'd known you were going to do that, Tony, I wouldn't have wrecked my reputation by coming here."

"But—why did you come?"
"Why did you ring me up?"

The voice of Mr. Latimer sounded very loud and clear.

"Because I've been behaving like a sulky kid, and I'm jolly well ashamed of myself. It was all my fault, old girl, and America's the dickens of a long way off..."

"It is" said his visitor "and or

"It is," said his visitor, "and—and I'd rather you didn't go there, Tony, if you don't mind. That's what I came here to say. I tried to telephone you, but I couldn't get through, so I had to come. Very forward and unladylike of me, I know, but I didn't

see why our silly pig-headedness should spoil everything. And it was all my fault, Tony—not yours."

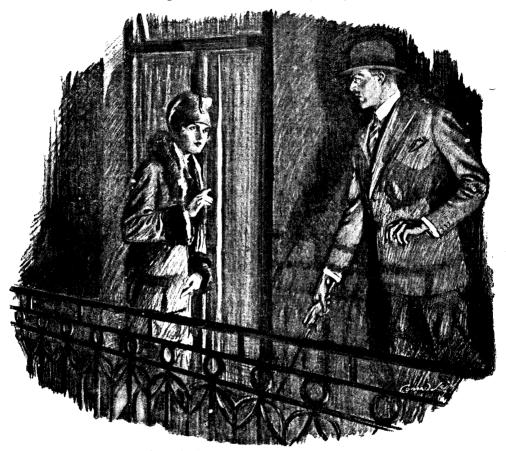
For a moment or two there was silence in the room—a silence that was shattered by a sound as of a chair thrust violently aside, and then the voice of Mr. Latimer:

" Oh, Betty!"

Then silence again, while out on the balcony Captain Sheridan, incapable of speech, movement or coherent thought, stared at of at peace with all the world, "is a firstclass, Number One brick. Has she fixed it up with old Roger yet?"

"No, poor darling. Roger's a dear, but he's so dreadfully thick in the head. He can't see an inch beyond his nose, and Felicity won't help him. It's funny, Tony—she'd have done anything on earth to—to put things right for you and me, but she won't let me give Roger a hint."

"Well, well," said Mr. Latimer indul-



"'I want to know who that woman is, Roger, and I'm going to find out!""

his companion in the pop-eyed, slack-jawed manner of the utterly stupefied. As for Felicity, she leaned upon the railing and looked down into the gloomy street, smiling faintly to herself.

Time passed, and at length:

"So that's all right," came the voice of Elizabeth. "Now I must go, Tony, and you can jolly well unpack again.... Felicity will be glad about this—she's been very worried about us."

"Felicity," said Mr. Latimer, in the tone

gently, "we must see what we can do for the poor old fish. How would it be to——"

But the exact nature of his suggestion must remain for ever unknown; for it was at that moment that Captain Sheridan emitted a curious strangled noise, whirled about, gripped Felicity by the shoulders so forcibly that she gasped, and said in a kind of throttled whisper:

"Is that true? Is that true, Felicity?"
His captive tilted her fair head to one side, looked up at him and smiled.

"Poor Roger!" she said, and in the dim light her eyes were like stars. "Listeners never hear any good of themselves, do they?"

"Then," said Roger, speaking as one in a trance, "it was Betty you were talking about

this afternoon?"

"Why, of course!" said Felicity. "I didn't mention her name, because she'd hate me to talk about her affairs, even to you. Who did you think I meant?"

"You," answered Roger simply.

Felicity started very slightly, and her eyes widened.

"Me? But—but—oh, Roger, was that why you wouldn't help me?"

"Yes," said Roger. "It seemed a—a

bit too thick."

"Then why did you come to see Tony, after all?"

Roger coughed awkwardly and shuffled his feet and gazed intently at the top of her head.

"Oh, well, I thought about it a bit, and —and it looked as if I was letting you down, in a way, so I thought I'd just pop round

"I think," observed Felicity gently, "you're rather more than a dear, Roger." Roger gulped a little, but remained dumb.

"But just a little thick in the head," murmured Felicity to nobody in particular. "Though, of course, you're not a marrying man, are you, Roger?"

Captain Sheridan gulped again, and his grip on Felicity's shoulders tightened until she could have cried out; but she did not. He rumbled vaguely, cleared his throat loudly, and achieved speech.

"I am—now!" he said.

Some time later:

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Felicity.
"I'd forgotten all about those two children in there! And it's time I was going home, too. Beat on the casement, Roger dear. We'll say we came to say good-bye to Tony and got locked out."

With manifest reluctance Captain Sheridan approached the window and tapped smartly thereupon. Nothing resulting, he tapped again more urgently, and then with a violence that threatened to shiver the pane. Desisting from this vain labour, he turned a startled face to his fellow-exile.

"Nobody there!" he said.

Felicity chuckled and made a little gesture of resignation.

"Tony's taken her home," she said. "We might have guessed it."

"Shall I break it open?" inquired Roger,

lifting a massive fist.

"I don't think," said Felicity, "you'd better do that. It's not our window, is it? Personally, I don't mind waiting here till Tony comes back. 'And you can talk to me about India, Roger."

"I've got better things than that to talk

about," said Captain Sheridan.

### FIRST LOVE.

A LMOND tree, almond tree; pink against a primrose sky, When the sickle moon is high, Hold my secret close to thee, Almond tree; almond tree.

Something younger than the Spring, Older than the dawn. When the first frail flow'r is born. Hold my secret close to thee, Almond tree; almond tree.

When my heart is growing old, When my hair is white. Pale upon the edge of night. Hold my secret close to thee, Almond tree; almond tree.

MARJORIE D. TURNER.



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE.

FIRST LADY: There's your neighbour. 'Ow d'yer like her? SECOND LADY: Not much; she's 'aughty, an' hif there's one thing I can't abide, it's aught.

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### THE FIRST OF APRIL. By Jean Signet.

"You look as fresh as a rose, Daphne. Let me kiss you," I said.

She bent her head, and after kissing her I took her head between my hands and gazed earnestly at the top of it.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing to worry about, darling, but what price for your first grey hair?"

Daphne dashed to the mirror and turned her head in all directions.

"I can't see it."

"Of course not—without a back-glass it is impossible to see all round the head."

She came to me and, bending her head, said: "Pull it out, Peter."

"But won't ten more come in its place?"

"Never mind."

I fumbled amongst her hair, there was a sharp "Oh!" and I held aloft the trophy. Daphne seized it, saying: "No wonder you hurt so much; you've pulled out three perfectly beautiful hairs and left the grey one in my head."

"I give you my word of honour that I

haven't."

"Then where is it?"

"Existing only in your own imagination."

"You brute! After telling me that I had a grey hair and then torturing me by pulling out

three coloured ones, you calmly tell me that I imagined that I had a grey hair."

I simply said: "What price for your first grey hair? It is the first of April, my dear."

Daphne laughed. "You had me beautifully, but come along to breakfast, the porridge is getting cold. Do you think this room will have to be re-decorated?"

"The ceiling certainly requires whitening, but the walls and woodwork are in quite good

condition."

"I think so, too, so I'll tell Stubbins to do only the ceiling."

"How is the spring-cleaning getting along?"

"Oh, we shall be finished by Easter; I always think it is a true Lenten penance to turn the house inside out. What makes me so furious is when you men-folk pretend that we enjoy doing it."

"Well, don't you?"

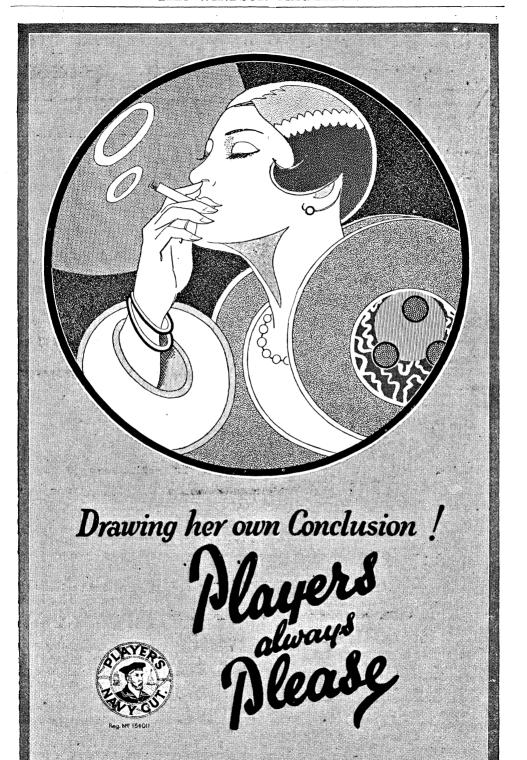
"I certainly don't, but it is a necessary evil, for dust and dirt creep into every minute hiding-place, and for health's sake it is imperative to dislodge the enemy. By the way, my watch has stopped."

"Did you forget to wind it last night?"

" No."

"Did you wind it too far? Do you think the mainspring is broken?"

"I am quite sure that I did not over-wind it."



"Well, I got a year's guarantee with it, and as I bought it only at Christmas I had better take it this morning to Burton's on the way to the office."

"Thank you, dear; I miss the feel of it on my wrist."

Daphne handed me the case, neatly wrapped in paper, before I left the house, and I slipped it into my pocket.

My train was late into Town, so I left the case at the jeweller's, asking an assistant to take it to Mr. Burton to see what was wrong with the watch, and arranged to call later.

I gazed at him in astonishment. He passed the case across the counter, and on opening it I found a piece of paper neatly pinned to the blue velvet cushion with these words: "It is the First of April."

"Please accept my apologies for wasting your time in this way," I said to Mr. Burton. "I played a trick on my wife this morning and this is her revenge. I never dreamt that there was no watch in the case."

"I quite understand, sir, and I am afraid I

spoke rather hastily just now."

"Please do not apologise for your very natural vexation. Good morning."



THE POINT OF VIEW.

LOOKER-On: I've been watching 'im for four hours, and 'e hasn't caught a single thing. Extraordinary how some people waste their time!

After a busy morning I was hastening to lunch and had already passed the jeweller's before I remembered the watch. Retracing my steps, I entered the shop and asked to see Mr. Burton. He came with the watch-case in his hand.

"I hope there is nothing much wrong with my wife's bracelet-watch," I said. "If you remember, I bought it only last Christmas, and, as you assured me it was of excellent quality, I gave a larger sum than I had intended doing. You gave a year's guarantee with it, but it is giving trouble already."

Mr. Burton's austere face did not change.

"In consideration of the date, sir, I suppose that I must not take exception to your joke at my expense, but, if you will permit me to say so, I think such things are better kept out of business hours." When I reached home I found Daphne wearing a very pretty gown, and on her wrist was the watch.

"You little wretch, you've made me look an utter fool to-day."

I told her what had happened. To do her justice, she was really very sorry, and told me that she thought the case would be opened in my presence by an assistant, and had never dreamt of the proprietor being involved. She apologised so prettily that I had to forgive her.

"I am afraid you were not very truthful this

morning.'

"Yes, I did not over-wind the watch, neither did I forget it. I wound it a teeny bit—just enough to be able to say that I had wound it, but so little that I knew it would run down by breakfast-time."





Saves money and ensures the lightest and daintiest cakes, scones, pastry, puddings and pies.

## BAKING POWDER

# **CHEST DISEASES**

"UMCKALOABO acts as regards Tuberculosis as a real specific."

(Dr. Sechehaye in the "Swiss Medical Review.")

"It appears to me to have a specific destructive influence on the Tubercle Bacillus in the same way that quinine has upon Malaria."

(Dr. Grun in the King's Bench Division.)

If you are suffering from any disease of the chest or lungs—spasmodic or cardiac asthma excluded—ask your doctor about UMCKALOABO, or send a postcard for particulars of it to—Chas. H. Stevens, 204–206, Worple Rd., Wimbledon, London, who will post same to you Free of Charge.

# **Short Cuts to Beauty**

By MIMOSA

My advice to smart women, who demand the very best results, is to leave most toilet preparations alone. When facial applications are necessary, get only the pure ingredients, just as they come to the chemist himself. I will tell you in this column, from time to time, just what to get and how to use it. Do not be persuaded into buying some cheap toilet preparation. Any chemist can supply you with genuine concentrated ingredients, and I know personally that most firms make a speciality of selling original packages of all kinds of pure ingredients, both direct and by post. I can point out to you, however, many useful hints, which involve no expense at all.

"About Shampooing."—Even the best shampoo is somewhat drying, and if your hair is not naturally oily, I suggest that just before the shampoo you apply olive oil thoroughly to the scalp, rubbing it into the hair roots vigorously. Then use pure stallax for the shampoo. Dissolve a teaspoonful in a cup of hot water. This will leave the hair very clean and glossy.

"A Velvety Skin."—It is hard to tell you what kind of powder to use, skins vary so. I suggest that in your difficulty you use no powder at all, but apply a little lotion made by dissolving one ounce of cleminite in four ounces of water. This gives a much better finish than any powder, suits all complexions and stays upon the face, during the most trying conditions, as long as you could wish. It makes the skin look very soft and velvety, and its use cannot be detected.

"Renewing the Complexion."—Yes, the discoloured, faded outer veiling of the complexion must be absolutely removed, and I know of no safe way to do this except to use a little Mercolized Wax, applying it at night like cold cream. The active principle in Mercolized Wax soon absorbs the weakened and devitalised surface which so annoys you, revealing the fresh and beautiful young skin underneath, which is always there only waiting to be freed. The process usually takes about ten days, is quite harmless, and acts so imperceptibly that no one can tell what you are doing.

"Long, Curling Lashes."—Clipping the eye lashes is very often unsuccessful. They sometimes do not grow again. Far better to apply a little pure mennaline with the fingers to the eyebrows and lashes just before retiring at night. This greatly stimulates the growth, and darkens the colour of the hairs.

"How to Make Hair Tonic."—There is no reason why you should buy the high-priced hair tonics you mention, when you can make just as good or better yourself at home. Get an ounce of boranium, and mix with a quarter-pint of bay rum. Apply this to the scalp each night, working it in with the fingertips, and in a short time you should see a considerable improvement, and find a complete absence of dandruff.

"To Reduce Plumpness."—The latest method of reducing obesity certainly is far more pleasant and convenient than all previous methods. It consists merely in taking clynol berries. The fat person who wants to reduce without the usual rigid diet, exercise, sweating baths, etc., now puts a few of these little brown berries in his or her pocket and swallows three or four each day. Most chemists stock them.

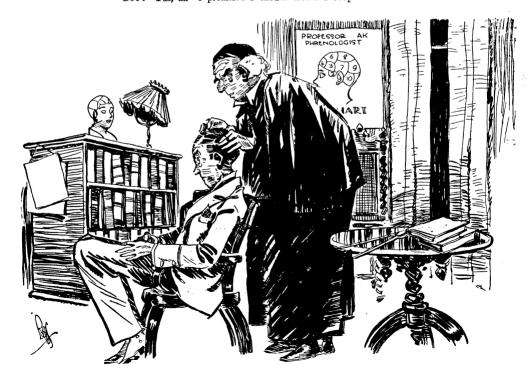
"Removing Hair."—I always recommend caution in the selection of a hair remover, and therefore suggest that you only use sipolite instead of the depilatories you mention. Get about half an ounce from the chemist and mix a little into a paste with a few drops of water. Applied direct to the superfluous hair, it causes it to wither and die in a few moments, when it can be rubbed off, leaving no trace.

"About Soap."—I should say that your trouble is caused by the soaps you have been trying. Personally, I always recommend a soap called Pilenta, because I have never known it to fail to give satisfaction. It is an absolutely pure superfatted soap, designed exclusively for use upon delicate skins, and it has the most delightful perfume I have ever found.



#### MISPLACED SYMPATHY.

KINDLY DISPOSED VICAR: Tell me, little boy, why do you cry? BOY: Farver's bin an' drowned all the kittens!
KINDLY DISPOSED VICAR: Oh, dear me, that is indeed sad!
BOY: Yus, an' 'e promised I should drown a couple!



CAUSE AND EFFECT.

Phrenologist (arriving at sudden hollow in client's head): Er—mechanically bent? Pedestrian Client: Yes, a motor-bus!





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### The Mindsor Magazine.

No. 401.

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### When Great Grandmama

was a little one



there were no motors, aeroplanes or radio—little girls wore long frilly frocks and curls. But one thing hasn't changed—

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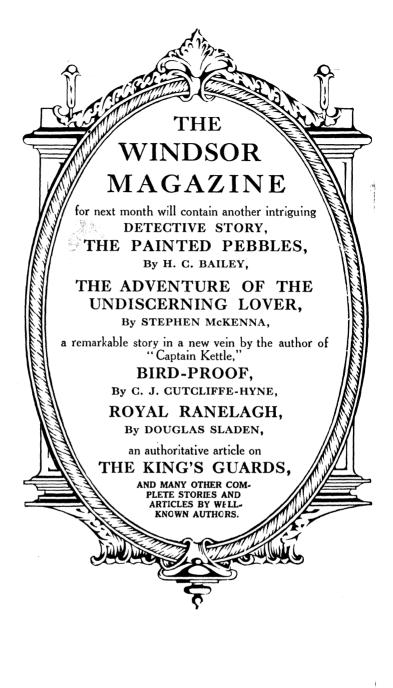




Photo by]

[Lassalle.

MISS MYRA HESS.
(See article on page 656.)



"Mr. Lee took a step nearer Reggie, his truculent chin came out. 'You're for the prosecution, so you can't hear the other side?'"

# ZODIACS

### By H. C. BAILEY

### ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

T was spring. Even in Whitehall the sun was shining.

Mr. Fortune looked up at it morosely and climbed into a taxi and was jolted away to that one of his clubs which most resembles a mausoleum. In the gloom of its hall as many as three venerable forms were watching the tape machine. Mr. Fortune gazed at them with horror and sought the most sepulchral room in the club.

It is at the top, it is low, its small Victorianly curtained windows maintain a stubborn defensive against light and air, it has sullen furniture and its drab walls are pitted with portraits of members completely dead.

Mr. Fortune took a remote corner with a monograph on extinct worms and surrendered to his emotions. He believes himself to love the country. He is a gardener of standing. But for the tedious affair of

the poison in the Home Secretary's Easter eggs he would have been in the company of hawthorn and lilac, enjoying his symphony of iris. He disliked life.

The room became even darker. The chimney moaned. Rain and hail rattled on the windows. And Sir Marmaduke Jones opened the door. He is the most fashionable of women's doctors, looks like it, dresses like it, walks like it. His tripping splendour crossed the room.

"Hallo, Fortune! A little below yourself. Have you been buying Zodiacs?"

Mr. Fortune turned to him with sad eyes. "What are Zodiacs?" he moaned.

"How innocently he says it! I thought you knew everything, Fortune."

"No, no. I'm not a physician. Tell me about Zodiacs. They sound horrid."

And Sir Marmaduke sat down and told

him. Zodiacs were a mine in Kurdistan. Lord Blancapel's latest. Platinum. Went off with a great boom. People behind the scenes, you know, said there was absolutely no limit. But a week or two ago the shares took a turn. Nobody knew why. Quite a sensation. Nothing like it ever known in Blancapel's mines. Very sound man, Blancapel, safe as the Bank. Queer things, these panics. . . .

Mr. Fortune moaned gently. Mr. Fortune looked out of the window. "It is a beastly

day," he said.

That was his introduction to the affair of Zodiacs.

His next scene in it was set in the private view of the Academy. He was still out of luck, he could meet nobody but dreary important people; he was meditating the desperate resort of looking at the pictures when Lady Dolly Pendeen bumped into him. She looks like Little Bo-peep, and by the testimony of her friends ought to have been a jockey.

"So sorry," says she over her small shoulder. "Oh, wars! It's Mr. Fortune."

"Yes. That's not my fault," he sighed.

"One fine large hump?" She looked up at him with her head on one side. "Are you in Zodiacs, Mr. Fortune?"

"Heaven forbid."

"Thank Heaven. Aren't we pious? I say, you're a wonder. Every blessed man here is talking Zodiacs, and most of the women."

"I always was an outsider," said Mr.

Fortune sadly.

"Rats," said Lady Dolly. "What put you off? Haven't you any use for Blanco?" "Blanco?"

"Old Blancapel. Look at them buzzing

round him, flies on the jam."

Mr. Fortune saw a little bald man of sandy texture who resembled his tailor. But Lord Blancapel was less talkative. He had the manner of a bored potentate receiving homage. There was plenty of it.

On the next day Mr. Fortune was in the Central Criminal Court assisting the typist who poisoned the Easter eggs to prison. As he came out to streets drenched with spring rain a newsboy howled in his ear. He recoiled shuddering, he rejected the paper thrust upon him, he hurried to his car. Driving home he read on every placard the substance of that raucous yell: Death of Arthur Bure—Mr. Bure Found Dead.

Arrived at his door he sought enlightenment from the chauffeur. "Sam, who was the late Mr. Bure?" "I been wondering myself, sir," the chauf-

feur grinned.

"We're so innocent," Mr. Fortune murmured. "Get me the papers. All the

papers."

Thus he came into the middle of the case. The papers explained to him that Arthur Bure was the other self of Lord Blancapel, a director in all the many companies which flew the Blancapel flag, managing director of "the new money-maker, Zodiacs." And Mr. Bure had been found dead on Barton Heath. That was all.

Barton Heath is a large tract of upland common a dozen miles out of London, and about it is what house-agents describe as an "exclusive residential district." A book of reference provided the information that Mr. Bure's home was there.

It did not seem to Reggie a case requiring the expert mind. He ate two muffins and dozed over the last play of Signor Pirandello.

As he went yawning to dress for dinner his parlourmaid presented him with another

batch of evening papers.

DEATH OF ARTHUR BURE. BIG SLUMP IN ZODIACS. THE GREAT SLUMP. MR. BURE FOUND DEAD. The headlines in pairs assaulted his eyes. "Oh, ah! Yes. I hadn't thought of that," he murmured. "I'm afraid I wasn't really thinking." He

read the papers in his bath.

They had not much more to tell about the death of Arthur Bure. A breeder of Sealyhams exercising her dogs had found a man's body on Barton Heath and informed the police. It was at once identified as Mr. Arthur Bure. Mr. Bure had been enjoying his usual excellent health, and the news of his death had caused great surprise and regret in the district. The police were anxious to hear from anyone who had seen him out that morning.

So the report ran, carefully conventional. The space necessary to do honour to the event was filled up with Mr. Bure's financial glories and his house and his philanthropy and his O.B.E. The other half of front pages was given to the slump in Zodiacs. For some days before Mr. Bure's death they had been tumbling down. When the news was whispered into the Stock Exchange that afternoon they crashed. Picturesque reporters spread themselves imaginatively. City editors were verbose, oracular, smug.

"Yah," said Reggie Fortune, and came back to the bald narrative of the death and squirmed in his bath. "Yes. We're being very discreet. I wonder." He gazed at those twin headlines. The Great Slump. Mr. Bure Found Dead. Death of Arthur Bure. Big Slump in Zodiacs. Every effect implies a cause. But you do want to know which is which. This is kind of circular."

He came out of his bath and went to dinner with his more earnest sister—the one who married a man in the Treasury. It was perhaps the only party in London that night at which no one mentioned Zodiacs or Mr. Bure.

The morning papers had nothing more to say, but something to leave out. The announcement that the police were anxious to hear from anyone who had seen Mr. Bure out walking was eliminated. In discussing the case, which he ranks as rather recherché, Reggie Fortune is wont to say that this was the first thing about it which interested him. He ate his omelette pensively. It appeared to him that the police were very cov over Mr. Bure.

He was in the marmalade stage, still thinking so, when a card was brought to him: Mr. Franklin Lee, Universal Club. The name meant nothing, the club less. The man who was shown into the consultingroom was large and lean and loose-made. He looked as if he had slept in his clothes, but was clean and shaven. The brown bony face declared that he was a nasty fellow to cross. He had an unquiet eye.

"Mr. Fortune? You are Mr. Fortune?

I want to consult you."

"I'm not in ordinary practice, you know."

"Medical expert, aren't you?"

"Well, that's one way of putting it. Did

anyone send you to me?'

For a moment the man hesitated. Docsn't matter, does it? Heard about you from the papers. You have all the big cases. I want you to take up a case for me. I'd like your opinion. It's like this——"

"One moment. One moment. Have

you seen a solicitor, Mr. Lee?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you know, I'm not a lawyer. Your solicitor could tell you whether you'd better come to me. And I can't."

"I know what I want."

"Yes, yes. But I might only be able to give you something else." Reggie watched the restless eyes. "A solicitor would let you know whether it's a civil case or a criminal."

"I'm not a criminal," the man roared. Reggie leaned back in his chair. "Now, we're talking about cases, Mr. Lee," he said mildly. "In a criminal case, I may have to advise the Public Prosecutor. So I can't hear the other side."

Mr. Lee started up. "You've been got at already, have you? I was a silly fool to come." He took a step nearer Reggie, his truculent chin came out. "You're for the prosecution, so you can't hear the other side?" He laughed. "That's pretty good, Mr. Fortune."

He stamped out.

Reggie Fortune sank down in his chair. "Your trick, I think," he murmured. "You play a dashin' game, Mr. Lee."

"Beg your pardon, sir"—a fluttered parlourmaid entered—"the gentleman went

off without his stick."

Reggie took an aged nobbly blackthorn and handled it carefully. It had white mud about the ferrule. Its other end was broad and heavy.

"He would have gone off without his head if he'd brought it," Reggie com-

plained.

"Perhaps he'll come back for it, sir," said the parlourmaid.

"I shan't be at home," said Reggie. He took a cab to Scotland Yard.

The Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department looked up at him from a report in several typewritten pages. "Hallo, Lomas, doing work? What have you been doing with the Bure case?"

"My dear fellow, we haven't had time to do anything. What in the world do you

know about the Bure case?"

"Nothing. Nothing. Been rather careful about that, haven't you?"

"This tone is very painful, Reginald. What's the matter?"

"Well, you know, I did think you were being rather cov."

"My dear Reginald! Are you feeling neglected? I'm afraid there's nothing in

"Yes, yes. I thought that was what you

were trying to convey."

"You know, this isn't like you," said Lomas. "I should call it peevish. What's the grievance?"

"Officially, no grievance. But speaking as a simple citizen, I think the police are practisin' a certain economy of truth."

"Let me know what you mean, please," Lomas frowned.

it for you."

"Well, this fellow's found dead. Seems to be a death of some public interest. Anything about how he died and why he died is kept out of the papers. In the evening the police want to know who saw him last. In the morning they don't. And no explanations. And the Stock Exchange goes ramping on. The simple citizen says the Bure case is being handled. Quite firmly handled."

"I don't like the phrase, Fortune."

"Nor do I, Lomas."

"You mean it looks as if evidence was being made up or hushed up for the sake of the gamble in Zodiacs?"

"It's a wicked world, Lomas."

"Thank you, I've been here some time," said the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. "I didn't suppose we should get through this without people talking nonsense. It's a perfectly straight case. It's been handled quite correctly. I was just reading the reports from Barton Heath. I shouldn't have done anything different myself. We can't consider the Stock Exchange. A man is found dead: our business is to find out if it was a natural death, and, if it wasn't, to get hold of the murderer. The inspector down there didn't choose to give anything away. He was perfectly right."

"It wasn't a natural death, then?"

Lomas turned the pages of the report. "Fractured skull—injury to the brain," he smiled. "Doesn't sound very natural, Reginald. Bure's own doctor and the divisional surgeon have both examined him. I suppose they would both know a fractured skull if they saw it."

"Yes, it is an emphatic sort of thing. And why does Mr. Bure get his skull fractured to help on the slump in Zodiacs?"

"I don't know anything about Zodiacs," Lomas frowned. "The police action is absolutely regular. When the inspector heard of the death he wanted to find out if anybody had seen Bure on his last walk. So he told the reporters to say so in the papers. When he got to work he found out that a man came to call on Bure that morning and went with him when Bure went out for the last time. Well, he couldn't put his hand on the fellow, he didn't want to warn him that he was suspected, so he told the papers to drop the notice about wanting witnesses and kept it dark that the police suspected foul play. Now are you satisfied?

"Well-meaning man. Did it all for the best. But I don't follow the workings of his mind. If Bure's companion smashed Bure's head in, he won't believe the police haven't noticed it. Bein' so coy only tells him to look out for himself."

Into the room came Superintendent Bell, hasty and happy. "We're in touch with him, sir."

"Good. Have him summoned to the inquest and don't lose sight of him."

"Good morning, Bell," said Reggie.
"How is Mr. Franklin Lee feeling now?"

Bell's face expanded in a broad, paternal smile. He looked at his chief and chuckled. "Now, how the devil did you know that?" Lomas cried.

"Not second sight. Nothing supernatural, Lomas old thing. Just luck."

"Any particular kind of luck?" said Lomas unpleasantly. "I hope I don't intrude, Reginald—but have you been doing something in Zodiacs yourself?"

"No, no. I was born of poor but pious parents. Also I have no head for gambling. I can't count. But thanks for kind inquiries. So Mr. Franklin Lee is in Zodiacs, is he?"

o Mr. Franklin Lee is in Zodiacs, is he?"
"You'd better ask him," Lomas laughed.

"No, I don't think so. I'm afraid he isn't loving me. You see, he called on me this morning and asked me to take up his case."

"The deuce he did!"

"Yes, that was rather my feeling."

"Did he tell you what he'd done?"

"I didn't ask him. I said we hadn't been introduced. He said he wasn't a criminal and quit."

"What did you make of him?"

Reggie reached for a cigar. "We didn't get on, you know," he said carefully. "Not what you'd call tactful." Smoke grew about him. "A bit of an absent-minded beggar, our Mr. Franklin Lee."

"Rattled, is he, sir?" said Bell.
"Yes, yes. That was indicated."

"They tell me he's powerfully made," said Lomas. "Rather violent in his manner? Nasty temper?"

"Well, he didn't like me. He's a big

chap, yes."

"It all fits, doesn't it, sir?" said Bell.
"Yes. He fits. Physically. But if he

did it, why did he want to consult me?"
Bell laughed. "That's an easy one, sir.

So that he shouldn't have you against him."
"I wonder," said Mr. Fortune. "You know, Lomas, if he thought I could make something of the case for him, I think I'd better have a look at it for you."

"It's a queer business," Lomas frowned.
"The case seems straight enough. Come and hear what he has to say at the inquest."

Mr. Fortune went away confirmed in his opinion that the police were being coy. He

did not say so. He suspected Lomas of nothing worse than an excessive discretion, a point of tactics on which he is wont to differ from that excellent official.

And the slump in Zodiacs stopped. On the day after Mr. Bure's death they had been ten a penny and no buyers. Then it was suddenly discovered there was a market; the price jumped, checked, wavered and slowly climbed. As Reggie Fortune drove down to Barton with Lomas for the inquest he remarked on this. "It is infernally queer," Lomas growled. "Bure's death seems to have pulled the concern together again."

"Why?" said Reggie.

"Good Gad, I don't know. If it had smashed them, I could have understood it."

"Oh, could you? But they were slumping before Bure died, slumping, good and hard."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. Same like you. I don't know anything. But I don't believe anything either. A hearty, comprehensive incredulity. You should try it, Lomas. Very stimulating to the intellect."

"I dare say. I have to believe evidence."
"Oh, my aunt!" said Reggie. "Evi-

dence! Where is it?"

"You're going to hear it. Have you made up your mind it isn't true beforehand?"

Reggie stared at him. "Not your usual kindly self, Lomas. A little fretful, a little

peevish with me."

"I don't like your tone. I know it's a nasty case. You might take it our hands are clean. You needn't be so infernally superior. You know what we're up against. You've had Franklin Lee trying to tamper with you already."

"Tamper! Well, well! You should have been there. He tampers like a rhinoceros." But Lomas withdrew from the

conversation.

The little coroner's court was crowded with reporters. The coroner, enjoying his brief hour of fame, prolonged the formalities pompously. At last Mr. Bure's butler was in the box: to identify the dead man as his master; to relate that a gentleman giving his name as Franklin Lee called on his master on the morning of the death, about noon, and went out with him. "They didn't come back, sir. Mr. Bure never came back."

Amelia Fison, breeder of dogs, was walking on the heath in the afternoon, some time

between the showers, about half-past two. Her dogs found a man's body. She recognised Mr. Bure. He seemed quite dead. She found a policeman and he telephoned, and she took him back to the body. Did Miss Fison notice anything about the body? "Well, he was dead. He was all wet."

Reggie Fortune stirred, a thing impossible without disturbing Lomas, who glanced at him and saw on his round pink face a mild excitement, as when a child hears from careless elders something it wasn't meant to.

Dr. John Smith came into the box, a plump man with a large important manner and a turn for oratory. Mr. Arthur Bure was one of his patients. Mr. Bure was a man of sixty, enjoying excellent health. In every way a first-class life. When he reached the body, Mr. Bure had already been dead an hour or two. Impossible to be more precise. The resources of medical science . . .

Reggie Fortune groaned.

The body was lying on its back. There was a large lacerated wound on the head at the juncture of the occipital with the parietal bones. The skull was fractured. About the left ear and on the neck below the flesh was swollen and bruised. There were no other injuries. He had made a postmortem examination with Dr. Keir. He came to the conclusion that the cause of death was injury to the brain inflicted by a violent blow from some blunt instrument, such as a heavy stick. "Anything to add, doctor?" Dr. Smith had nothing to add. There was no room for doubt.

Reggie Fortune leaned back and his hand tapped lightly on his knee, and he watched Dr. Smith's stately exit with dreamy eyes.

Dr. James Keir, divisional surgeon, brisk and snappy, had examined the body with Dr. Smith. Come to the same conclusion. Cause of death, blow from blunt weapon, dealt by powerful man.

Lomas looked at Mr. Fortune, but on that plump and boyish face saw only the

drowsy stare of a vacant mind.

The powerful man came into the box. At the name of Franklin Lee the packed court rustled and murmured and its uplifted faces gazed at him. His sallow face darkened, he put his hands in his pockets and stood slouching and grinning.

A fat solicitor cleared his throat. He appeared for Mr. Franklin Lee, sir. Mr. Lee desired to give every information. The coroner bowed. "Why did you go to

Mr. Bure's house, Mr. Lee?"

"He asked me to."

"That is important. Have you any proof of that?" A letter was produced. "But this asks you to his office in the city last week."

"I know. I went. He wanted to do a deal. We never got near terms. So he asked me to come down to his place and go into the whole business."

"But you have no record of that invita-

tion?"

"Let's get this right. I'm just home from Kurdistan. I've got a concession there that makes the Blancapel Zodiacs Company look silly. Bure knew that. He had to get hold of me or Zodiacs were bust. But he was a good little bluffer. He thought he could bluff me."

Another solicitor bobbed up in the middle of that. Representing Mr. Bure's executors, he objected. "Please, please," the coroner swelled. "No financial advertisements, Mr. Lee. Your point is you had something to sell to Mr. Bure."

"No, sir. I had something Bure wanted to buy. I might have sold if he had bid a price. I had him by the short hairs. He knew that, but he didn't know I knew it. He never got near my figure."

Again the solicitor was up. It must not

go out that this was the fact.

"What we have to deal with is Mr. Lee's statement that he came down at Mr. Bure's request," said the coroner.

"Yes, sir. It will be denied. I have witnesses to say he pressed himself on Mr.

Bure."

Lee laughed. "That's the Blancapel game, is it? Now we know."

"I can't have this," the coroner frowned.
"You are doing yourself no good, Mr. Lee."

"All right. All right. Keep him quiet, Well, I came down to see the little I dare say I was a fool, but I thought we might have done a deal after all. The bottom was dropping out of his Zodiacs. It was worth anything to him to get hold of me. But he couldn't think big. was still trying to bluff me with nothing in his hand. He wouldn't offer anything fit to look at. So I told him he was wasting my time. He was badly rattled. He tried to keep me, and when he couldn't he came out with me. I had him walking with me across the heath to the station talking nineteen to the dozen. I told him to go to the devil and left him. That's the last I saw of Mr. Bure—standing on the heath, puffing."

- "You left him alive?"
- "I did. I never touched him."

"But you had a quarrel?"

- "I don't call it a quarrel. Bure did all the talking. I only said 'Nothing doing,' 'Guess again'—that sort of thing. I didn't care if we did business or not. I knew I was on velvet."
  - "I see. Had you a stick with you?"

Lee hesitated. "I dare say." "What sort of a stick?"

"Ordinary walking-stick."

"Do you produce it?"

"No. I haven't got it. I must have left it somewhere."

"Where?"

"Haven't a notion."

"That is unfortunate. Do you wish to add anything, Mr. Lee?"

"I've told you all I know." He left the

witness-box in a heavy silence.

The solicitor of Mr. Bure's executors arose and coughed. Grave statements had been made attacking the deceased which would be absolutely denied—several witnesses—important evidence. The coroner thought it obviously necessary to adjourn. . . .

But while they talked Mr. Fortune touched Lomas and rose and slipped out of the court. Lomas found him in the lobby.

"What is it, Reginald?"

"I must examine Bure's body."

"Good Gad!"

"Tell these people. Fix it up. I'll come down to-morrow."

"My dear fellow, how can I bring you in now? These doctors are absolutely confident. Their evidence was quite clear and definite. I don't see my way to interfere with them."

"I said 'must,' Lomas."

Lomas and he examined each other's eyes. Lomas went back into the court.

When he came out again Reggie was sitting in the car behind a long cigar. "How can you smoke with your eyes shut?" Lomas complained.

"You've noticed that's unusual? What a gift is the power of observation, Lomas!

And how rare!"

"I've noticed you do it when you are at a loss."

"Not a loss, no. Only wondering. When I have all the facts I may be at a loss."

"That's very gratifying. Do you mean to say I had to interfere and set these fellows' backs up because you were merely wondering?"

"No, not merely. There were points."

"Good Gad! If it's any consolation to you, you have made two hearty enemies. These doctors want your blood. Dr. John Smith means to be quite nasty with you."

"I wonder," Reggie murmured.

"Damme, Fortune, you're making my position rather difficult. I've shown a good deal of confidence in you. The last thing I wanted to do was to take sides in the case. And now on your bare word, without a single reason, I've told these doctors the police aren't satisfied with their evidence. But we can't go on like this. It's time you showed a little confidence in me."

"My dear fellow! Oh, my dear fellow!

I do. I have. Absolutely."

"You think these doctors are trumping

up a case?"

"I wouldn't say that. They may be right. But I know they're jumping to a conclusion. Several little things they didn't go into."

"For instance?"

"Well, where was his hat? If I thought a man had been knocked on the head, I should want to look at his hat."

"It may have fallen off before he was hit. We have to assume there was a struggle."

"Yes, that's the kind of logic that makes me uncomfortable. What I assume is that his hat wasn't damaged. That tells against their theory, and they ought to have mentioned it."

"For what it's worth," Lomas shrugged.
"There are half a dozen answers: it blew off, it fell off, it was knocked off before the fatal blow. The point is, they found the man's skull smashed. You don't doubt that?"

"No, no. But you'll have to produce the hat."

"Anything else?"

"Well, I want to have a little talk with the Air Ministry."

"The—the Air Ministry?" Lomas repeated. "Good Gad, you don't suppose the man's death was seen from an aeroplane?"

"I hadn't thought of that," said Reggie in a low solemn voice. "My dear Lomas, you do have ideas. You really do. No. I wasn't going to ask about aeroplanes. Only the weather. In these days the Air Ministry looks after the weather for us. They keep the records. They ought to be able to tell us what the weather was doing on Barton Heath while Mr. Bure was out."

"What on earth has the weather got to

do with it?"

"My dear chap! But you heard Miss Fison's evidence. She said she went out between the showers. She said when she found Bure he was all wet. Seemed to strike her. It struck me."

"Why, what's the matter with that? I

don't see the point."

Mr. Fortune did not answer for a moment. "No, nobody cared about his being wet," he said sadly. "Things did get eliminated." He paused, again regarding Lomas pensively. "Well—there's the little matter of time. When did those showers break? If it was looking like heavy showers when Lee left Bure's house, it's still more queer Bure went with him."

"More queer?"

Mr. Fortune looked at him with half-shut eyes. "Why did Bure go with him, Lomas?"

"Bure was worried about this Zodiacs slump. Lee was somehow mixed up in it. Take Lee's own story: he had a concession to sell which would have been very useful to Zodiacs. They couldn't come to terms. Lee went off in a rage. Bure hurried after him to have another try. They wouldn't be thinking about umbrellas. Then Lee lost his temper, hit him and left him in the rain." Mr. Fortune lay back looking at the sky. "Well," said Lomas triumphantly, "what's the matter with that?"

"It's all right. But it's going to be denied, you know. You assume Bure was mighty keen to get hold of Lee. Bure's solicitors are bringing evidence that he wasn't. Their story is, Lee was worrying him. If you can tell me why a man of sixty who doesn't want to be worried goes out on a stormy day running after the man who worried him, I'll be very interested."

"Oh, Lord, I don't suppose we are going to hear the truth about Zodiacs," Lomas laughed. "You know, you're rather capricious about evidence, Reginald. You don't like it when the doctors ignore Bure's hat. But you're rather ignoring Lee's stick. The stick that he conveniently lost."

"His stick? Oh, I know all about that.

He left it in my house."

Lomas sat up. "Did he, though? You didn't happen to mention it."

"I didn't know it was relevant."

Lomas smiled. "These little errors do occur, don't they? Is it the sort of stick that could crack a man's skull?"

"Yes, yes. I think so."

"And that's very interesting, isn't it?" Lomas laughed.

The car was driving through London. Reggie leaned forward and told the chauffeur to stop at the next newspaper boy. He bought a paper and studied it. "Good heavens, you don't want to read the report of the inquest?"

"No, no. Latest prices." He pointed to the figures of Zodiacs. "Another little point that's ignored. Why does the inquest

on Mr. Bure send Zodiacs up?"

"It is a filthy case," said Lomas.

"Lots of mud about," Reggie agreed cheerfully.

This did not comfort Lomas, nor even conciliate him. He refused to go and eat muffins at the Academies Club. So Reggie Fortune ate his muffins with a professor who talked the new mathematics, and came home a little later for dinner, dreamily placid.

The parlourmaid met him in the hall. There was a lady waiting for him: Lady Dolly Pendeen; been waiting some time. He applied himself to the process of waking

up.

A pair of slim legs were displayed before the fire in the morning-room, crossing and uncrossing. That was all he could see of her at first; her small person was sunk in a big chair, but she started up as he came in. "Now, what in the world is the matter with you?" said Reggie.

Her little shoulders moved. Her face was red. "Oh, Mr. Fortune, you don't mind my coming, do you?" She took his hand and held on to it. "You've always been such a lamb, I felt sure you'd help me."

Reggie recovered his hand. "Haven't you got a nice doctor of your own?"

"An ordinary doctor wouldn't do. I say, can't we sit down and be comfy?"

"I beg your pardon," said Reggie solemnly,

and set the chair for her.

"You sit down too." She put her hand on his arm. He brought a chair to the table a yard off. Lady Dolly disposed herself in the chair, coat thrown back from her boyish little self, neat legs displayed, and smiled brightly. "You see, it's frightfully important to me, Mr. Fortune."

"And what is it that an ordinary doctor

won't do?"

"Well, he wouldn't know. You will help me, won't you?" She put her head on one side.

"I'm limited, you know," said Reggie, who had never liked her so little.

"You're not! You're wonderful! I

wanted you to help me about this Zodiacs case."

"I don't know anything about Zodiacs."

"Oh, I don't mean the silly shares. I mean this man who was found dead. You know all about that, I'm sure you do."

"I know all that's in the papers."

"Oh, but that isn't anything, not really, is it? You see, I'm awfully interested, Mr. Fortune. It means a frightful lot to me. I want to know what you really think about it. You see, there's only you, Mr. Fortune."

"Oh no. Lots of people."

"But it will come to you, you know it will. Are they going to make out Franklin Lee did it?"

"I'm sorry." Mr. Fortune stood up. "This isn't doing anybody any good."

"You won't help me?"

"You oughtn't to be here. Good night."
Lady Dolly stared at him a moment and
ran out of the house.

Mr. Fortune's comfortable face was troubled. "Not one of our nicer young persons," he said sadly. "Did Lee send her? The blighter. Yes, Lomas, a mucky case."

The morning papers said there was sensational evidence at the Bure inquest: doctors find death by violence; Franklin Lee's story; the missing stick. It was obvious what reporters and sub-editors were getting ready for. And Zodiacs bore up firmly.

At the mortuary Mr. Fortune found the two doctors waiting for him with a hostile manner. He said that it was very good of them. The divisional surgeon snorted and understood Mr. Fortune was not satisfied with his evidence. Mr. Fortune wouldn't say that: the department wanted another opinion. Dr. Smith must own that he was surprised: he had found himself in complete agreement with the divisional surgeon; it appeared to him there was no possibility of doubt; he would be glad to know what point in their evidence suggested it to Mr. Fortune.

"My dear doctor, I don't doubt you found

everything you said you found."

"I am obliged to you." Dr. Smith was more haughty than ever. "Am I to infer that you expect to find something else?"

"It's a mistake to rely on expectations,

you know," said Reggie slowly.

"I am glad to hear you say so," Dr. Smith condescended. "I came to this sad case with a perfectly open mind, Mr. Fortune. I may say, a blank mind. I was

forced to the one conclusion. Pray understand that I shall be happy to assist you in your examination."

"Ay, we'll be present, if you please," the

divisional surgeon growled.

Mr. Fortune said that they were very good. But when they were shut in with the dead body he had to be curt with Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith wanted to demonstrate. The amiability of Mr. Fortune does not extend to those who would teach him his job. Dr. Smith, swelling and purple, retreated upon the divisional surgeon and they murmured together.

Medical students have been heard to say that old Fortune is slow. He was very slow with the body of Mr. Bure. The murmuring of the two doctors rose loud before he was done with the damaged head. But that was not the end. The body also

occupied him long. . . .

When at last he turned away his face was still set in thought.

"Well, sir," Dr. Smith cried, "do you

dispute our conclusion?"

"You'll not deny he was killed by that injury to the head?" said the divisional surgeon.

"Fracture at the junction of the occipital and parietal bones," Dr. Smith boomed; bones depressed, injury to——"

"Yes, I did notice it," said Reggie.

"Oh, I am glad. I venture to remain of the opinion, Mr. Fortune, that was the cause of death."

"What did you make of this?" Reggie pointed to red lines running round the dead man's chest. "You didn't mention it."

The divisional surgeon smiled. "I did not. He wouldn't be dying of shingles."

"Look again," said Reggie, and went to wash his hands.

"I'll grant you, it looks queer." The divisional surgeon's voice changed as he pored over the body. "But what would it be but shingles, Mr. Fortune?"

"Undoubtedly shingles," Dr. Smith boomed. "I see nothing abnormal, Keir.

It could be nothing else."

"Ay, ay." The divisional surgeon looked at Reggie. "What are you putting to us, Mr. Fortune?"

"Well, what about his hat?" said Reggie.

"Lord, man, I've never seen his hat," the divisional surgeon cried. "I didn't get to the body on the ground. I only saw him laid out here. What about his hat, Smith?"

"I know nothing of his hat," said Dr. Smith. "He had none on when I reached

him. Really, Mr. Fortune, I must say I don't follow your methods."

"I dare say the policeman picked it up," Reggie murmured. "They're very careful, the police." He went out and called the keeper of the mortuary. He wanted Mr. Bure's hat. He wanted all Mr. Bure's clothes.

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir. They're sopping wet. Wet to the skin he was. And

I didn't like to dry 'em."

"Quite right," Reggie nodded. And the hat and the wet clothes were brought. He picked up the hat. It was a bowler. It was perfectly in shape. He looked at the two doctors. "Not a sign of a blow," he said softly.

Dr. Smith took it from him. "I presume his hat fell off in the struggle," he cried,

fingering it. "Why, it's torn."

"Yes, that's very interesting. A tear on the left side. But not crushed at all. How was it torn, doctor? Not by a blow." He took up the wet clothes and examined them carefully with nose as well as eye.

"Gad, man, I get you now," the divisional surgeon cried, and himself began to search them. "But there's nought to show."

"No. He was all wet," Mr. Fortune murmured. "What was in his pockets?" A note-case, a gold cigarette-case and some silver had been brought with a penknife and a wooden match-box. He opened the match-box. The match-heads were sodden. He took up the penknife and opened it, produced his own and laid blade upon blade. He wandered round the room, found a pen, pulled out the nib and laid it on the table. Mr. Bure's penknife picked it up.

"Magnetised!" the divisional surgeon cried. "Look you now, Smith, it's magnetised! Not a singe on his hair or his clothes, but his knife's magnetised."

"He was all wet, you see," Mr. Fortune

said mildly.

"Man, is that what gave you the hint? You're extraordinary acute, Mr. Fortune."
"I do not follow," Dr. Smith announced.

"The poor fellow was struck by lightning in those thunder showers we had and we would have been putting it on the man Lee! It's a very remarkable case. Ay, ay, ay, but you'll be none too proud of it,—eh, Smith? Mr. Fortune, I hope you'll let us down as light as you can."

"Yes. Unusual case. You'll find others recorded, you know. Don't get 'em in

practice, of course."

"It is an amazing theory," said Dr.

Smith, pale and shrunken. "I—I really—I must not be understood as accepting it. Dear me, it's very late. I have a number of calls—I must leave you." He hurried away.

The divisional surgeon grinned. "That's how you make us feel, Mr. Fortune. Be gentle with us, won't you? Thank God, we've done no harm. It's a lucky doctor who can be sure of that every time, eh?"

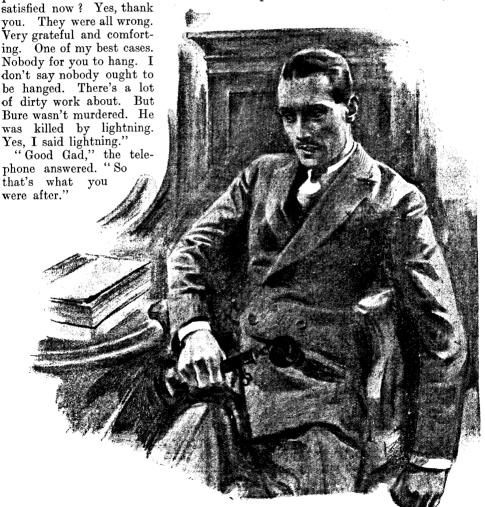
A little later Reggie talked to Lomas over the telephone. "Peace be with you. Come and dine with me to-night. Why? Oh, just to show there's no ill-feeling. For old sake's sake, you are still, dear, the prettiest doll in the world. What? Am I

you? I'm going to give you some Musigny in its bloom and one of Elise's own filets. She said something about crêpes."

"This is killing the fatted calf. I appreciate it. Thank you, I won't have a cocktail. But I should like a little information."

"I was afraid so," Mr. Fortune sighed. He rolled out of his chair. "Exhibit A. Note of telephone message from the Air Ministry. A heavy thunder shower passed over the high ground of Barton Heath

between 1 and 2 p.m. on May 1. Exhibit B. A penknife found in the right-hand trousers pocket of the late Arthur Bure, which is

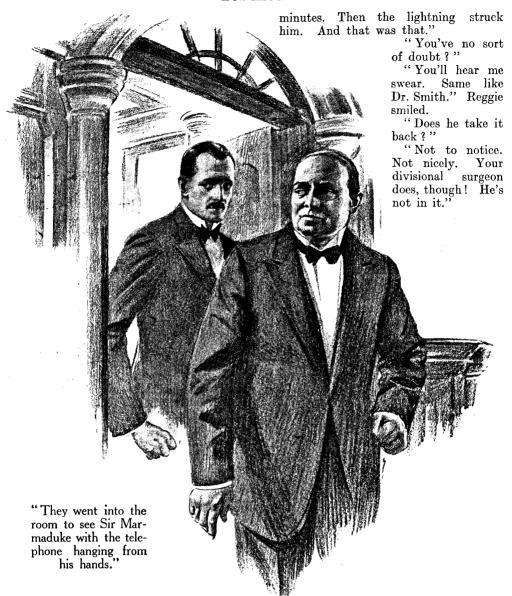


Lomas came to dine before the usual time. He found Mr. Fortune dressed and dozing in front of a bright wood-fire. "Is that you?" the pink face said without opening its eyes. "Don't have a cocktail, will

sufficiently magnetised to pick up a nib-thus."

"But is that all your evidence?"

"Oh no, no. Bure wore a bowler hat. It had received no blow, but on the left side



it was torn. The injury to the head and the bruise on the neck show no marks of any weapon. Bure's chest bears red streaks such as are only produced by shock from electricity—or heat. Other points too."

"But I thought if a man was struck by lightning he was always burnt or singed

somewhere."

"Quite often. But Bure was all wet. He wouldn't burn. There have been cases like it. It's quite clear. Lee left him and went on to the station. Bure was up on the heath when the storm came down with no shelter. He'd be drenched in a few

"Oh, Lord!" Lomas let his eyeglass tall. "What's this? Not in it?"

"Hush. Put off the world. Here is Gladys. Here's dinner."

They went in. They ate Elise's mousseline of sole and her filet and her pancakes and drank Musigny of 1906 and talked of these things and others not wholly unworthy of them. Not till they had come to coffee and smoke did the Bure case intrude. "I suppose you see your way through this Zodiacs business, Reginald?" said Lomas.

"Oh no, no. Speakin' strictly, we don't

get anywhere, do we?"

"My dear fellow, you mustn't say that. You've kept us out of a very nasty mess. All my acknowledgments. And you've saved Mr. Franklin Lee's life for him."

"Yes, I think so. Yet I cannot love

him."

"Not a winning personality, no," Lomas agreed. "On the make. Excessively. But he has a right to live."

"Well, the other fellows have no right

to do him in."

"You suggest bad faith? I thought you

did."

"Look at it. Our Dr. Smith, Bure's medical man, as soon as Bure's dead goes bald-headed to get Lee hanged for it: nobbles the other doctor, and, confound him, he cheeks me."

"Professional vanity, my dear fellow."

"Yes. That's all right. But I don't care for the professional vanity that swears

blind to hang a man for the Stock Exchange."
"It is a filthy case," Lomas nodded. "I suppose Lee has got hold of something that dishes Zodiacs?"

"I dare say. Lots of strings being pulled on all sides."

The parlourmaid came in. Sir Marmaduke Jones would like a word with Mr. Fortune.

"Oh, my aunt!" Reggie murmured. "What are we coming to? Pardon me." He went into his consulting-room.

Sir Marmaduke Jones was not in evening dress, a deficiency which in him at that hour was previously unknown. He explained that he was sure Fortune would forgive him: been terribly driven: did hope he wasn't troublesome: just wanted a few words: his old friend Smith. . . .

Mr. Fortune waited for him to take breath. He seemed to want it. "Smith?"

said Mr. Fortune.

Sir Marmaduke meant John Smith of Barton Heath. A very sound man, most reliable opinion. Smith had been consulting him, and really he thought it was only right to come and put Smith's view of the matter.

"He's done that himself," said Mr. Fortune.

But really, Fortune, it couldn't be dismissed so curtly. Smith's opinion was formed after the most careful examination, a well-grounded, reasoned opinion, and (Sir Marmaduke must say) it commanded confidence. The theory which Fortune had put forward was surely a little fantastic: it depended on very slight indications and

imaginative inferences. Surely Fortune must realise that to throw over Dr. Smith's conclusions for such a startling hypothesis must have a very odd look.

"Don't mind me. The jury will choose whether they believe Smith's evidence or

mine. That'll be all right."

Sir Marmaduke must ask his dear Fortune not to take the case so lightly. After all, there were very grave matters involved: very large interests. Was it fair, was it right, that Fortune should traverse the medical evidence already sworn on such small grounds? A very, ve-ry dangerous course. As an old friend—long experience—a man of the world—Fortune might trust him—no rash action—Fortune would never regret it.

"In a simpler world I should knock you

down," said Mr. Fortune.

"My dear Fortune, you mistake me sadly.

"Oh no. No mistake. It was either a bribe or a threat. I have the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department here. He'll be very pleased to see you. You're what we were waiting for."

Mr. Fortune went out and gave Lomas a summary of Sir Marmaduke Jones. "Good Gad! The scoundrel! Who sent him?"

Gad! The scoundrel! Who sent him?"
"That's your show. Come on." They
came downstairs, and as they came heard the
voice of Sir Marmaduke uplifted.

"The beggar's on the telephone," Lomas

muttered. "Wait."

Sir Marmaduke's voice went higher. "What? What? I can't hear you. I can't hear. Oh, my God!" There was silence. They went into the room to see Sir Marmaduke with the telephone hanging from his hands: he dropped it, he staggered, he fell. Reggie went to him. Lomas went to the telephone. "Hallo, hallo. Who is that, please?" This familiar tune filled the room while Reggie worked on the fallen man. "I can't get an answer. What's the matter with him?"

"Fainting. Shock." Reggie rang the bell and servants came, and while Sir Marmaduke was taken away Lomas sat down again

to the telephone. . . .

When Reggie came back he was still at it, but in a brisk conversation with Scotland Yard. "Right. Get on to it. I'll be there myself in ten minutes." He rang off and turned to Reggie. "Well, how is the patient?"

"In his little bed, confound him. He had the impertinence to squeeze my hand."

"All my sympathy. A worm, quite a worm. It was Lord Blancapel he rang up. I suppose he had to tell his employer he'd failed with you. Blancapel has just shot himself. Butler was scared by a row, went into the study, found him dead with the pistol in his hand. Telephone receiver lying on the table. Marmaduke Jones must have heard the shot and crashed."

"Yes, yes. Very convenient all round,

"Oh, quite! Thank you for a very pleasant evening, Reginald." Lomas tripped

It was late in the afternoon of the next day but one that Lomas came back. He found Mr. Fortune in the drawing-room arranging with tender care a bowl of iris.

"My dear Reginald, I thought we should have seen you before," he said brightly. Mr. Fortune stared melancholy curiosity and asked why. "Well, I think we have worked it all out." Mr. Fortune sighed and asked what. "There's merry hell on the Stock Exchange. All Blancapel's things

are down and out. He seems to have been in a bad way when he started Zodiacs. That was a double or quits gamble. Then Lee turned up with a rival concession on the best of the Zodiac ground. Bure was put on to buy him out. They did bid high, but they couldn't find Lee's price. There's some desperate letters in Blancapel's papers. When Bure was killed, Blancapel snatched at the chance to get rid of Lee. He's been in touch with Smith and then this worm. Marmaduke Jones. That was the last chance. When Jones telephoned there was nothing doing; that broke him. He dropped the telephone and took his pistol. You see, we've got it all fitting now. He put it about Lee murdered Bure; that sent Zodiacs up again. While he could keep the case strong against Lee, they'd go up and up. But with Lee cleared he was beat." Lomas rubbed his hands. "We've made a pretty neat case of it, haven't we?"

Mr. Fortune gazed at him with round, admiring eyes. "How do you do these

things, Lomas?" he murmured.

### NEXT MONTH—"THE PAINTED PEBBLES."

Mr. Fortune turned over the bones. "Yes. Quite old. It could be mammoth ivory." He frowned at the pebbles. They were water-worn, smooth and grey, painted in red, with strange signs, like an ox's head, an eye, a snake. "This is a known script, isn't it?"

"Dear me, yes," said Professor Pigeon, the well-known Oxford authority on Spanish cookery and prehistoric man. "There's a close resemblance to the Sinai inscription. Almost exact. Think of it! That peculiar alphabet used in England in the age of mam-

moths, ten thousand years before they were using it in Sinai. It would be stupendous."
"Yes. Yes." Mr. Fortune was fingering the pebbles. "But this paint isn't ten

thousand years old."

But though Mr. Fortune, with his usual clearness of vision, formed a conclusion, the verification involved some trouble and one or two thrilling experiences. A firstclass story.

### WE ALL KNOW HER.

SWEETEST smiles beyond believing; Gentle touch that thrills with joy; Honied tones, like music stealing, Through the cares that most annoy.

Sunshine round her footsteps glowing.-Don't you know the charming fay? Would you be surprised by knowing

This is May?

Frosty frowns, and far from civil; Chilling touch, and airs of gloom; Moods that make the young buds shrivel After coaxing them to bloom.

Tears and wails, and fruitless yearning,-Don't you know the peevish fay? Who would be surprised by learning This is May?

JOHN LEA.

# THE CHILD & THE BIRD

### By ELEANOR FARJEON

Illustrated by M. O. Prater.

The Child: My Bird, why do you sing no more?

I used to think I never heard

A voice as sweet as yours before.

Why do you sing no more, my Bird?

The Bird: Ah, could you sing, or would you try,
If you had wings, and could not fly?





The Child: But look, my Bird! I've given you A little cottage for your own,
With wicker bars I painted blue,
The prettiest cottage ever known.

The Bird: Oh, once I had the two blue domes
Of night and morning for my homes.

The Child: But every day I bring you seeds,
And water in a little pan,
I hunt the garden for green weeds
To give you pleasure when I can.

The Bird: But once the whole earth was the wild Green garden that I fed in, Child.





The Child: But look! no storm can hurt you now,
I shield you from the hail and rain,
Safer you are than on the bough,
So sing again, oh sing again!

The Bird: Ah, safety gives me no such powers
To sing, as joy does after showers.

The Child: My Bird, I cannot let you go!
Your feathers are so soft and fine!
I love you so, I want you so,
I must, I must have you for mine!

The Bird: Yours in a cage I cannot be.
I was your own when I was free.





Open the doors! and you shall hear Such singing as you never heard. Open the doors! and then, my dear, All birds shall be your singing-bird, A thousand birds instead of one, Singing and singing in the sun.

The crooning dove, the happy thrush, The skylark trilling on the edge Of light, the warblers in the rush, The cheeping pipers in the hedge, All these shall be for ever yours The moment you undo my doors.



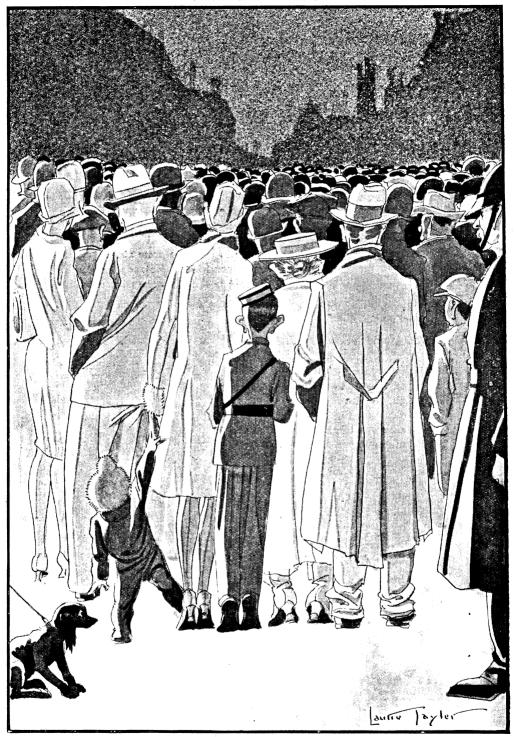


The Child: My Bird, I do not understand.

I thought if I could only catch
You fast inside my very hand
You must be mine. But there's the latch
Undone. Now fly away and sing,
Oh sing again, you pretty thing.

The Bird: Sweet! in your garden wrens shall nest,
And swallows build below your eaves.
Sweet! on your sill shall robins rest,
And blackbirds whistle from your leaves.
And every year, when songs are new,
Sweet! they shall all belong to you.





DOES IT MATTER?

The strenuous activity of the crowd is explained by (a) Bus late, (b) Road-menders at work, (c) Elephant in Piccadilly, (d) Fashionable wedding, (e) Dog-fight, (f to g) Any old thing.



# THE DATCHLEY INHERITANCE

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE RICH MAN EMBARRASSED

## By STEPHEN McKENNA

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

" NOTWITHSTANDING anything to the contrary contained in my Will I GIVE DEVISE AND BEQUEATH all my real and personal estate to such grandson of mine as shall be the first to marry within twelve calendar months from the date of this Codicil and shall within that period legally adopt the surname of Datchley and shall within six months of his marriage give an Undertaking to reside at Datchley Castle for not less than six calendar months in each year after my death. If there shall be no such grandson then the provisions of my Will shall take effect."

Extract from the codicil to the last will and

testament of John Datchley.

OR the last eight years I have spent my short Whitsuntide holiday at Thornborough. This summer it threatened to be shorter than usual, as I was engaged until the last moment in winding up the Datchley estate, journeying to Scotland and back, expounding the will to the old man's grandsons and holding myself at their disposal when they called at my office

with their suggestions, enquiries and con-

I was looking forward to at least three days of change and rest, though the married members of the club have lately been filling the dormy-house with more wives and families than the bachelors altogether like. The dining-room, indeed, presented the appearance of a fashionable London restaurant on the first night; and I was beginning to feel rather old, rather shabby and rather out of the movement when a youth, goodlooking and well-dressed, hurried across, calling:

"Mr. Plimsoll! If you're all alone . . ." I turned to find myself face to face with Peter Fairfax, principal private secretary to the Minister of Fine Arts.

"Unusual for you to be dining by yourself," I said, as we made our way to a remote table for two.

In virtue of his official position, my companion had long been assiduously courted by political hangers-on who hoped that their opinions and wishes might percolate through him to his chief. As a man of highly developed social talents, he was habitually cultivated by hostesses with ailing parties to galvanize. And now, as potential heir to the Datchley millions, he might have been expected to be basking in the smiles of mothers with marriageable daughters.

"There's a purpose in it," Peter answered darkly. "By the way, have you any news for me about my cousins?"

"You mean, have any of the Abbotsford or Gauntlett boys married in the last day or two?" I asked. "They have not told me so."

"I suppose it will be cabled all over the world when one of them does! I shall probably be abroad. Let's see, they have twelve months from the execution of the will, haven't they? Oh, I shall be back before the end of the time."

"But you're not trying to fulfil the conditions of the will before you start?"

"By looking for some one to marry me before the others can present their claims? Would you have found me dining alone," he laughed, "if I hadn't been steadily avoiding the eligible young women who frequent this place? I wouldn't marry for forty times four million unless I were in love! And, as you can't marry on a private secretary's salary, it's better not to fall in love."

I beckoned to the butler and told him to

put a bottle of champagne on ice for me. It is a wine of which I partake sparingly, but I was elated by the first piece of good sense that I had heard from any of these young men since I expounded their grandfather's insane or malignant will a month or two before. In justice to myself, I had warned them that nothing would bring greater balm to John Datchley's spirit than the knowledge that, in their greed to get his money, they had injured themselves or one another, but I felt at the time that I was preaching to the deaf; and of those who had brought their troubles to me in the weeks intervening I can only say that, if the testator could have raised himself from his gruesome glass coffin to see how much harm he was accomplishing after death, he would have found that these boys were ably and energetically seconding The curse which had caused this money to make so many unhappy lives while the old man still shuffled through the empty rooms of Datchley Castle seemed to hang about it even after he was gone. When Luke Abbotsford simulated devotion to a film-actress in the cynical hope that one divorce more or less would make no difference to her, I felt that old Datchley must be chuckling. He must have chuckled again and with deeper satisfaction when young people who might have married if he had left them alone were set apart by the baleful influence of his wealth.

"This is the most sensible thing I've heard for a long time," I told Peter. "All the same, if you're tired of being a private secretary, the five thousand that your grandfather gave you will open a wide field."

"I may think about that when I get back," Peter answered, "but I must stav with the Minister for his Australian tour. He's off in a few days' time now. . . And it's an interesting life, you know. I should be very happy if people would only leave me alone," he ended with a sigh.

"Were you dining alone in self-defence?" Peter wriggled his shoulder-blades impatiently and threw a cautious glance round the room:

"Wherever I go, people buttonhole me about my precious grandfather! You see Ivy Colchester by the door? She wanted to know if it was true that I'd been left a fortune. Edna Farrow, at the next table, saw me getting out of the Minister's new Daimler and immediately began to gush about 'our latest millionaire'."

"At your age I should have been flattered

if several extremely attractive girls had taken so much interest in me."

"The interest dates from Gaffer Datchley's death," Peter rejoined; "and it's ill-founded at that. They won't believe me when I tell them that, apart from my legacy, I haven't received a penny and shan't receive a penny. I suppose you couldn't drop 'em a hint? They'd believe you."

"Aren't you making rather heavy weather of this?" I asked. "Help me out with this champagne and see if that doesn't brighten

your outlook on life."

As Peter bent to lift the bottle out of the ice-bucket, two girls sauntered by on their way to the door. The first murmured audibly: "Champagne!"; the second replied no less audibly: "These plutocrats can afford to drink it every night. Isn't it nice to think that we knew him when he was quite simple and poor?" Peter straightened his back and observed crushingly that the wine had been ordered by me.

"It's like that all day," he fumed, as the girls passed out of hearing. "Silly little

 ${
m fools}$  ! "

"You mustn't mind a little chaff," I said.
"I don't," Peter answered; "but, when those girls aren't ragging, they're trying seriously to make me think they're rather in love with me. I swear it's true! Dolly Furneaux dragged me out in an east wind to see the moon last night! And Betty wanted me to come for a walk before breakfast. Can't you convince Mrs. Furneaux that I'm not the parti they all imagine? If not, I shall take the remedy into my own hands," he threatened.

"What will you do?" I enquired.

"I shall ask them if they're in earnest. If they say 'no', I shall tell them to run away and play."

"And if they say 'yes'?"

Peter smiled unamiably:

"I shall say they must give me a few days to think it over. And, while I'm making up my mind, they mustn't come near me. In a week's time, you see, I shall be on my way to Australia."

#### II.

THOUGH I warned Peter more than once that night that he was becoming a suspicion too solemn, I decided before the end that I had been doing him an injustice. When we left the dining-room for a couple of chairs in the winter garden, he became the target for such smiles and glances as would have turned the head of a man with any

natural vanity. "Aren't you dancing, Peter?" asked one girl after another; and to each he replied: "I've given up dancing", or "I haven't finished my cigar", or "I'm going to bed in a few minutes."

"I never knew how good-looking, witty, amusing I was till this week-end!" Peter observed sourly. "Heavens, here comes that lisping Colchester child again! 'Aren't you going to danthe wiv me, Peter!' And she's bringing her mother! I suppose

I'd better go quietly."

As he rose with adequate alacrity and carried the girl off to dance, I offered his chair to the girl's mother. Seeing that Harry Colchester is a barrister whom I brief in any big Chancery action, it was long odds, I felt, in favour of her knowing that John Datchley had been a client of mine. With such seeming artlessness, however, was the conversation steered that we approached Peter by way of the general strike, the future of the Civil Service and a purely parenthetical question whether "that young Fairfax " would remain with the Minister of Fine Arts, now that he had come into a fortune, or whether he would enter the House of Commons on his own account.

"When you speak of a fortune," I said, his legacy is not big enough to keep him

as a member of parliament."

"I always understood that old Mr. Datchley was a man of considerable means," said Mrs. Colchester with admirable indifference.

"He was a millionaire several times over," I replied, "but Peter is one of nine grandsons. I don't suppose you've troubled to examine the curious will that the old man left . . ."

"I didn't even know he was dead till someone mentioned it the other night,"

said Mrs. Colchester.

Perhaps I was misled by my imagination, but I fancied that my announcement caused her to look with faint apprehension towards the ball-room where her daughter was dancing with Peter. The girl must not do any-

thing in a hurry!

"The estate has not been distributed yet," I explained. "Mr. Datchley was anxious, it seems, to carry on the family name and would probably have chosen as heir the oldest married grandson. As none of the boys happened to be married, he left everything to the one who should marry first. It is a form of will, to be frank, that I abominate . . ."

"Then . . . you don't know yet who

will inherit?" asked Mrs. Colchester rather blankly.

"I shan't know for certain," I answered, "until one of these young men calls on me with the evidence in his hand.... Is Harry coming to steel you from me?"

the rumour of the celebrated Indian bazaar travels no more quickly than the rumour of a Sussex dormy-house. In moving from



"'Aren't you dancing, Peter?' asked one girl after

rigge. I must hunt Ivy off to bed; she's had a very tiring week . . ."

The trivialities that immediately followed are perhaps worth recording as proof that

the ball-room to the card-room—a distance of some thirty-five feet, I should say—I gave such time as was required for shaking hands with Harry Colchester, receiving his If I had interpreted Mrs. Colchester's expression to mean: "The girl must do

nothing in a hurry", I could only interpret

Mrs. Hazelrigge's to signify: "If my girl

is to do anything, she mustn't waste time."
"I am delighted to hear it," she told me,

Harry Colchester, who was spreading and

"The money goes to charity," I answered.

gathering up the cards in vain hope of per-

suading us to cut for partners, intervened to enquire what would happen if none of the

grandsons fulfilled Datchley's conditions.

"but the temptation . . ."

invitation to play, accepting it, excusing myself to his wife and finally—as I was not sure how long they would keep me up—chalking on the slate outside the secretary's office that I wanted to be called with tea at eight o'clock. I should consider two minutes a generous time for these few tiny acts; but, when I reached the card-room, all that I had told Mrs. Colchester was already known to Mrs. Hazelrigge and Lady Farrow. They both enquired whether Mr. Datchley had always been eccentric, as a will of this kind ("putting a premium on recklessness," said Lady Farrow; "offering a reward for improvident marriages," added Mrs. Hazelrigge) was clearly not the work

"You wouldn't have thought it would be a reward for improvident marriages," added so difficult," murmured Lady Farrow. I had the best reasons for disagreeing. Mrs. Hazelrigge) was clearly not the work "Once you have this overwhelming of a well-balanced mind. "I advised against it," I told them. inducement to marry,' I explained, "you must "To me, the idea of lining up eight or nine impecunious young men and wonder whether you're offering almost incalculable wealth not thinking more of the to the one who persuades a woman of any kind to go through a form of marriage with him . . ." "You say 'almost incalculable wealth

...?" murmured Lady Farrow.

"It's something in the neighbourhood of four and a half million," I said. "As a matter of fact, my fears have not as yet been fulfilled . . ."

money than of the girl, whether the girl isn't thinking less of you than of the money. If you take a man you all know, Peter Fairfax . . ."

"Unless he's quite exceptionally callow," objected Mrs. Hazelrigge with scorn, "he ought to know when a girl's in love with him. I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me a moment: I've left my spectacles upstairs."

Lady Farrow pushed back her chair, stood up and moved to the door in what seemed

a single movement.

"Let me get them, dear," she begged.

"I have to fetch my own."

"You wouldn't find them," Mrs. Hazelrigge answered, as she hurried in pursuit.

"These women!" Colchester exclaimed impatiently. "If you're going to play bridge, let it be bridge... I suppose I may as well find out if my wife means to cut in later."

I felt disposed to murmur "These men!" and to echo "Let it be bridge!" when I found myself marooned on a hard, upright chair and left to play patience while Harry Colchester primed his wife with the latest Once again the bazaar-rumour swept. along the passages and out to the verandahs. Hardly had I shuffled and dealt before Dick Furneaux, conscientiously casual, drifted , across to my table and enquired how long I was staying. He had seen me in the distance, dining with young Fairfax, and, while he did not propose to bore me with "shop", he must say that he thought Datchley's will an amazing production. Four and a half million, he understood; and the old man so indifferent to the human side of the business that he left it contemptuously to any one of his grandsons who would oblige him by marrying and taking his name.

"It's an odd will certainly," I agreed.

"You've read it?"

"No, Mrs. Hazelrigge was telling me about it," he answered.

On that, I excused myself and went into that general meeting-room which our secretary persists in calling "the lounge". I enjoy Furneaux's society little enough at any time; and now I was irritated by the discourtesy of Colchester and these two women in plaguing me to play with them and then deserting me. Without a shred of evidence, I felt safe in assuming that they were all carrying the bazaar-rumour to the quarters in which they were most interested. Though they would not be so crude as to bid their daughters regard Peter Fairfax as a man whom they might make a millionaire if they married him quickly enough, I feel that they were saying—with something of Dick Furneaux's inimitable carelessness—: "It's quite true about that boy. Mr. Plimsoll has just been telling me. The money goes to the grandson who marries first." Their subtile cordiality would hint that they had always thought highly of "that boy". I could agree now with Mrs. Hazelrigge that the "temptation" was terrible.

Finding Lady Farrow by herself, I asked where the rest of the party had dispersed. Without apologizing for her desertion, she pointed rather indignantly towards a window and informed me that I should probably find Mr. Colchester in the garden. The whereabouts of Mrs. Hazelrigge she could not tell me.

"She seemed to be pursuing young Fairfax when last I saw her," she added bitterly.

I wandered out of doors, leaving the bridge-party to its fate. An interval was taking place between the dances; and I found scattered couples walking about the garden or cooling in chairs under the trees. The girl with the lisp, who had taken Peter away from me, had in turn, it seemed, had him taken away from her; but of Peter I could see no sign indoors or outside. After roaming the garden fruitlessly for ten minutes, I was returning, driven in by the same east wind in which he had been required to admire 'the moon overnight, when I was arrested by a fragment of dialogue which I could not help overhearing.

"But we've always been friends, Peter."
"Friends, yes! But is it anything more,

my dear Betty?"

"If you can't see for yourself, you must

know I shan't tell you!""

"Then there's no point in talking. If you'll swear this isn't just a game . . ."

The rest of the dialogue, I am glad to say,

I did not hear.

#### III.

Ir was half-past ten when I entered the house; and the smoking-room was almost empty when Peter Fairfax threw open the door to admit one of the girls who had stopped by our table to banter him at dinner.

"Don't move on our account, please!" he begged me, as I stood up to go. "You know Miss Dolly Furneaux, don't you?"

I bowed to the girl and offered her a chair; but she looked at her watch and continued to stand.

"I think I ought to be going to bed," she murmured.

"You can't go till we've arranged things one way or the other," Peter objected.

"If you know your own mind, it's an easy question to answer. If you don't . . ."

I began to put away my spectacles and collect my books. If this was a continuation of the dialogue which I had overheard in the garden, I did not choose to have any part in it, though Peter would doubtless maintain that, if a girl spoke and acted as though she were in love with him, he was entitled to know whether she was in earnest.

Then I recollected with dismay that the Miss Furneaux with whom he had been talking in the garden answered to the name

of Betty!

"I shall see you in the morning," said Miss Dolly with affected airiness. "What time has the caddy-master given you?"

"I take it you don't really mean what you said just now?" Peter persisted without mercy.

"I didn't say I didn't," answered Miss

Dolly.

"But you won't tell me whether you meant it or not! Don't you agree it's rather a waste of time . . . ?"

"You are in a bad temper to-night, Peter!

Isn't he, Mr. Plimsoll ? ","

If I was not to be dragged into this most dangerous altercation, I saw that I must end it by a question which neither of them could answer.

"What's all the argument about?" I

asked.

"We were discussing a little . . . jaunt," Peter replied. "And, before going into details, I wanted to be sure that Miss Furneaux was really keen to undertake it."

it . . ."

"And I say," broke in Miss Dolly, reddening, "that I can't give an answer of any kind till I've had time . . . There's father

and mother to think of . . ."

"But there's no point in going to them for leave unless you're keen on the business yourself. If you're just being polite to

"Polite!" Miss Dolly echoed, scrutinizing his face for a hint of anything beyond thinly disguised impatience and a certain hard matter-of-factness which, in her place, I should have found effectively discouraging. "Good night."

When he had shut the door behind her, Peter dropped into a chair beside mine and

began to fill a pipe.

"They asked for it. And they got it," he announced between his teeth.

"What did they get?"

"What I told you. As they wouldn't

leave me alone and as you wouldn't drop them a hint . . ."

"I explained the position to Mrs. Hazelrigge," I defended myself. "And I have reason to think that she handed on what I said . . ."

Peter let fall his pipe and clapped his hands to his sides.

"You 'have reason to think'!" he echoed. "Well, that explains a lot. My stars, talk about man-eating mothers! I've been running and climbing ever since I left you; and now it's too late for a drink. The Colchester child started it, dragging me out into the garden after we'd danced round the room once and saying how nice it was to see me again. I said nothing, I just let her go on till you'd have thought we'd been in love for years. Then I said: 'D'you mean all this, Ivy?' She said she did. 'You mean you're really fond of me?' I said. She hesitated a bit and asked if I wasn't rather fond of her. I told her that until a month ago I hadn't had the means or the leisure to be fond of any one. wasn't quite true, because there's one girl here . . . But I'll tell you about her later. Well, I let Ivy down lightly. She's very young and rather weak in the head; and her mother's more to blame than she is. Believe me or believe me not, Mrs. Colchester came to see how we were getting on and strutted away, like a hen that's laid an egg, when she found us together. I suppose you'd told her by then that the Datchley story was true; and I suppose this was the 'Full Speed Ahead' signal for Ivy. I got rid of the girl by saying that this was all very new and strange and that I must have time to think it over. We sort of parted on the understanding that, if I find I'm in love with her, she'll find she's in love with me. Otherwise, there's to be no illfeeling on either side."

He paused to light his pipe; and I took occasion to say that they might both consider themselves lucky if they escaped without burning their fingers after playing with

fire for so long.

"It's a limited-liability sort of love," Peter commented acidly, "if we can part with so little regret. It almost makes you feel that we should meet with equally little . . . rapture, shall I say? Well, after Ivy, the Hazelrigge child blew along. There was no hesitation about her. She talked as though she was in love with me, you're to understand, because she was in love with me. She'd adored me from a distance long

before she'd heard about my grandfather (we hadn't mentioned him, by the way). I told her, too, that this was all very new and strange to me; and now I've put her on the ice beside Ivy. No more trouble with either of them, I fancy, for the rest of my time here. And, by the way, no more trouble with Betty Furneaux. She was modest and maidenly, the nymph pursued, refusing absolutely to say she cared for me until I said I was mad about her . . ."

"I inadvertently overheard some of your

conversation," I put in.

"Oh? Well, that saves time. I don't think she can reopen the attack without becoming unmaidenly. Dolly you heard. She'll let me know to-morrow. And so will the others. I expect to find they've all adored me from a distance for years, but it will be either the nymph pursued or the 'constant nymph' with all of them. And that means a little peace for me."

"Unless you receive what is almost a proposal of marriage from all of them."

"I shan't be here long enough to weigh their rival charms. And, if they'll leave me alone for even a few hours, I may find that I can exist without any of them. I told you there was some one in this place ..."

As he hesitated unexpectedly, I found that the assured private secretary, glib to mislead and prompt to mislay officious deputations, had been replaced by the bashful suitor, hungry for reassurance from any that would give it him.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" I asked. "If I'd known there was anything

in the wind . . ."

"There was nothing to tell! Everything's been so diabolically difficult the last few weeks . . . I'd arranged to come here before I knew anything about my grandfather's death. I'd had your letter about the legacy; and it was my last chance of seeing Daphne before I went away . . ."

"Daphne Raymore?" I asked. "Go

on!'

I had been Charles Raymore's best man twenty years ago; my acquaintance with his daughter dated from the first or second week of her existence. Though I now see less of her than I could wish, she remains my favourite god-child.

"She's been avoiding me like the plague since Gaffer Datchley died," Peter grumbled.

"If Daphne will have you . . . ," I began.

"I've written her a note, asking if she'll

come for a walk with me to-morrow. I've made it pretty plain what I want to talk about . . . Steady!"

He became elaborately nonchalant as the door of the smoking-room opened to admit

Daphne's father.

"The very man I was looking for!" exclaimed Raymore. "I've a message for you, Peter, from that girl of mine. Weren't you making some plan for to-morrow? She says she'll be delighted to come."

#### IV.

If I did not see Peter next day until after tea, I fancy that I saw every one who was directly or indirectly, legitimately or illegitimately, interested in him and his fortunes. The shy and patient, it seemed to me, lurked in my neighbourhood, hoping that I might say something about him; the impatient and bold demanded that I should tell them where he had disappeared.

I was coming in after my second round when Peter waylaid me with a request that

I should congratulate him.

"It's a dead secret," he added.

"You mean Daphne's accepted you?"

"If her parents approve."

On that I congratulated Peter in all sincerity. Neither then nor at any time in our hour-long conversation did he refer to his grandfather's will; and the only subject that he seemed to have discussed with Daphne or wished to discuss with me was whether he must, after all, accompany his chief to Australia.

"This has altered things rather," he explained. "Daphne's lent me her car; and I'm going to run over to his place for the night, to see what he thinks about

it."

Refusing even to drink a glass of sherry to his future happiness, he hurried out of the house on this word; and a moment later I heard a car starting. Thus it was that I found myself alone and defenceless when Mr. Richard Furneaux cornered me with a question about my "erratic young friend ", enquiring where he had gone and when he would be back. I thought that Furneaux seemed worried, but the depth of his uneasiness was only revealed when he began to talk with a candour that was hardly justified by our superficial intimacy. Would I mind, first, confirming precisely what I appeared to have told some one overnight about Peter's expectations from his grandfather? Was it true, in effect,

that this boy stood to inherit millions if he married? Was it of paramount importance that he should marry (as Furneaux had been given to understand) before the other potential beneficiaries? Could I say, without breach of confidence, whether Peter had talked to me?

"On what subject?" I asked.

"I want to know what he's been up to!" Furneaux replied, exploding suddenly. "Last night, from all accounts . . ."

He hesitated in a tardy attempt to control

his indignation.

"Last night?" I prompted him.

"Well, . . . he seems to have proposed to my daughter Betty."

"Considering how prepossessing both

your daughters are . . . ," I began.

Furneaux snorted ferociously:

"He seems to have found them prepossessing too! When Betty turned him down, he

proposed to Dolly!"

Though this account hardly tallied with Peter's, I could as yet see no justification for Furneaux's indignation with a young man who seemed laudably set on marrying into his family at all costs.

"I hope she didn't turn him down too?"

I said.

Through anger or inattention Furneaux

neglected to answer my question.

"And that's only the beginning of it!" he snarled. "What I've told you is all at first-hand, but I gather... One can't ask people point-blank, but you know Lady Farrow's girl? And the Hazelrigge child? Harry Colchester as good as told me..."

"How does Colchester come into it?" I asked, recalling that Ivy had been "let

down lightly ".

"His daughter's been treated in the same way! Yes! That's how it all came out! Ivy Colchester told my girl Dolly as a great secret that Fairfax had proposed to her last night and that she thought she was going to accept him. Dolly saw at once that there must either be a hideous mistake or else . . . well, I don't know how she could explain it, poor child. What I want to know first of all is whether Fairfax was drunk. He wasn't? Then you've taken away his only excuse. You agree?"

Feeling no desire to discuss whether drunkenness is ever an excuse for anything and resenting Furneaux's assumption that I was responsible for any fellow-member, drunk or sober, who had or had not made or received an offer of marriage to or from anybody, I directed attention to a term

which Furneaux or his informants seemed to be consistently misusing.

"When you talk of a proposal," I said, "do you mean that he definitely asked her . . . ?"

"Yes!" Furneaux answered stonily.

"It was something that you could make the basis of an action for breach of promise? What would be his motive?" I asked.

"The money, of course!"

"The jury might feel that the money was a reason why these young women were so ready to construe as an offer of marriage . . ."

"You mean they were throwing them-

selves at his head?"

"I mean there has been a misunderstanding," I replied with such patience as I could muster. "Peter told me—and I can testify to this, if required—that, since people became aware of his connection with the late John Datchley, they had manifested a new and embarrassing interest in him. I think it would be well to make sure whether he did more than ask for proof of their sincere and disinterested affection."

"I'm obliged to you for your advice.

Where is this fellow now?"

"He has gone to see his chief. I dare say you know that he is probably leaving England almost immediately."

"Is he coming back here first?"
"Ah, that he didn't tell me."

If I fancied that in getting rid of Furneaux I had got rid of those who stood in a like predicament, I was sorely mistaken. A new bazaar-rumour was spreading and swelling by the time I went up to dress; and, when I came out of my bedroom, I found the passage dotted with anxious figures, singly and in clusters, all urgent to have "just a moment's private talk with" me. The bazaar-rumour, reduced to agreed essentials and shorn of variants, now related that Peter Fairfax, who must have been mad or drunk or both, had made offers of marriage to

"Where he'll be wise to stay," raged Colchester. "If he crosses my path when

half-a-dozen girls and had then bolted to

I have a crop in my hand . . ."

"You should be careful," I warned him. "I don't advocate assault at any time; but, if you hope to justify it, do make sure of your facts first."

My advice aroused such a storm of indignation that I could not distinguish who was

speaking.

Australia.

"According to Furneaux, you're making out that these girls proposed to him . . ."

"When a man says to a woman . . ."

"What are the facts? . . ."

"I saw through him at once. I said he mustn't talk to me like that . ."

When at last the hubbub died down, I took the opportunity of administering to these girls—and to their parents—a lesson in the meaning of words. Peter—as they had to admit later—had not proposed to any of them; marriage had not been mentioned; and the only question that he had put was whether, in effect, they cared for him as much as they seemed. I did not ask what any of them had said or done to provoke such a question. I spared them the gibes and insinuations to which they would have to submit under cross-examination. The parents and the children, I felt, could be left to one another's mercy without any comment from me.

And with that I went down to dinner, hoping that they might be grateful to me for saving them from grosser follies. During dinner and afterwards, however, I discovered that gratitude held no place in their mind; and, as Peter was not at hand to bear the weight of their resentment, I was made whipping-boy for him. By the time I went to bed I had decided that I could not remain at Thornborough if the Farrows and Colchesters, the Hazelrigges and Furneaux were going to remain there too. Before turning in, I began to pack my suit-case and wrote a telegram to engage a room at Littlehampton.

My packing was disturbed from time to time by noises in the room next to mine. At first I thought that Peter had returned unexpectedly soon. Then Ι whether burglars had broken into the dormyhouse. Finally, as I heard the same light footfalls, the same cautious pulling-out of drawers, the same hurried but exhaustive ransacking, I guessed that the young women who had committed to paper that they were really as much devoted to Peter as their manner and conversation suggested were stealthily trying to recover and destroy the avowals of their unwanted devotion.

#### V.

I was waiting for my car next day when Daphne Raymore came out of the dormyhouse with a jewel-case in one hand and a letter in the other.

"You're not going away, are you?" she

asked. "I wanted you to give Peter a message."

"My room will be more welcome than my company," I answered rather savagely. "I can't say how much you've heard of the racket that's been going on the last day and a half..."

"I've heard more than I want," Daphne answered. "I don't know why you should go away, though. In fact, I was counting on you to explain things to Peter."

"I'll tell him anything you like, if he

comes before I go."

As she fidgeted with the letter, I saw that

her hands were trembling:

"I suppose I could leave a message at the secretary's office," she murmured with a visible effort to speak tranquilly. "I lent . . . Peter . . . my car, you see, and I wanted him to have it sent up to London."

"But your father told me you were staying

here the whole week."

"That was... before last night. I can't stay here if I'm likely to meet him."
She turned away to hide her face from

She turned away to hide her face from me.

"My dear, what's been happening?" I

"My dear, what's been happening?" I asked. "Peter told me yesterday... It was a secret, he said: you hadn't seen your people then... My dear, I was so glad! He was unhappy because you seemed to be avoiding him after his grandfather died..."

"Did he want me to throw myself at him like the others?" Daphne demanded in withering scorn.

"He was afraid that this accursed money, which attracted them, was frightening you away. What's the matter, Daphne? You don't imagine he was thinking of the money when he proposed to you?"

"I don't know and I don't care. He's done something that I could never forgive. I'm ashamed of my sex! And I should think those others are ashamed of themselves now. But I'm more ashamed of Peter . . ."

"He had a good deal of provocation."
As she shrugged her shoulders, I saw that
her eyes were merciless and I realized that
I was no longer talking to an individual

but to a sex.

"A man's who's capable of humiliating one woman is capable of humiliating all," said Daphne.

She stood up and walked towards the dormy-house, still fidgeting with her letter. I warned her that it would be a shock for

Peter.

"I couldn't marry him if I'd seen him hitting a woman," she answered, "whatever the provocation. This was rather worse. Those wretched girls have degraded themselves . . ."

"He never asked them to!" I had to put in. "He didn't want them to!"

"I daresay not. Peter isn't a cad by nature. It's an accident that I or you or any one knows anything about it. But, when things are broken, even by accident, somebody has to pay for them."

Suddenly stiffening, she handed me the note and hurried indoors as though she

wished to hide from me that what seemed to be broken was her heart.

I did not wait to deliver the letter; but, when Peter wrote to bid me good-bye from Tilbury, he stated baldly that Daphne had changed her mind.

"Alone of all the marriageable young women at Thornborough that week-end," he added, "she is convinced that we should not be happy together. As I am convinced that I should not be happy with any one else, I am sailing in an hour's time. If my grandfather's ghost retains my grandfather's sense of humour, he must be amused . . ."

### Hereafter follows The Adventure of the Undiscerning Lover.

### CHANGE OF VIEW.

#### YESTERDAY.

In my old garden there's a place
Where I can overlook the road,
An' see the motor-cars that pass
Along with every kind of load.
(I've got a seat at t'other end
When I be wanting to be quiet,
An' there the noise don't seem so loud
An' not a speck of dust comes nigh it.)

I looks at folks in cars that must
Screw up their eyes till they looks blind,
To keep out wind an' flies an' dust,
Thinks I, "What pleasure can they find?"
But I lets beauty just soak in,
I wants no motor rides—not me,
The same old view I've always seen '
From 'ere, is good enough for me.

#### TO-DAY.

A man as I 'ad used to know,
What left this village long ago,
Came poking round the place to-day
To see who's still alive this way.
An' mighty glad 'e seemed to be
When at my gate he spotted me.
"Why! John!" he laughed. "Why there you be!
I've got a car; come out with me."
He raced me miles, as pleased as Punch,
Then gave me what 'e called "some lunch,"
Then raced me back. Truth can't be hid,
I owns I liked it. Yes, I did.

G. S. CHAPMAN.



"Several of them had danced into her room during the day, and said her illness was 'a perfect shame."

# THE GHOST

# By THE LATE MRS. H. G. WELLS

THE was a girl of fourteen and she sat propped up with pillows in an old four-poster bed, coughing a little with the feverish cold that kept her there. She was tired of reading by lamplight and she lay and listened to the few sounds that she could hear, and looked into the fire. From downstairs, along the wide, rather dark, oak-panelled corridor hung with brown pictures of tremendous naval engagements exploding fierily in their centres, up the broad stone stairs that ended in a heavy creaking, nail-studded door, there blew in to her remoteness sometimes a gust of dance music. Cousins and cousins and cousins were down there, and Uncle Timothy, as host, leading the fun. Several of them had danced into her room during the day,

and said that her illness was "a perfect shame," told her that the skating in the park was "too heavenly," and danced out again. Uncle Timothy had been as kind as kind could be. But—— Downstairs, all the full cup of happiness the lonely child had looked forward to so eagerly for a month was running away like liquid gold.

She watched the flames of the big wood fire in the open grate flicker and fall. She had sometimes to clench her hands to prevent herself from crying. She had discovered—so early was she beginning to collect her little stock of feminine lore—that if you swallowed hard and rapidly as the tears gathered, you could prevent your eyes brimming over. She wished someone would come. There was a bell within her

reach, but she could think of no plausible excuse for ringing it. She wished there was more light in the room. The big fire lit it up cheerfully when the logs flared high; but when they only glowed the dark shadows crept down from the ceiling and gathered in the corners against the panelling. She turned from the scrutiny of the room to the bright-circle of light under the lamp on the table beside her, and the companionable suggestiveness of the current jelly and spoon, grapes and lemonade, and the little pile of books and kindly fuss that shone warmly and comfortingly there. Perhaps it would not be long before Mrs. Bunting, her Uncle's housekeeper, would come in again and sit down and talk to her.

Mrs. Bunting, very probably, was more occupied than usual that evening. There were several extra guests, another houseparty had motored over for the evening. and they had brought with them a romantic figure, a celebrity, no less a personage than the actor, Percival East. The girl had indeed broken down from her fortitude that afternoon when Uncle Timothy had told her of this visitor. Uncle Timothy was surprised; it was only another schoolgirl who would have understood fully what it meant to be denied by a more cold the chance of meeting face to face that chivalrous hero of drama; another girl who had glowed at his daring, wept at his noble renunciations, been made happy, albeit enviously and vicariously, by his final embrace with the lady of his love.

"There, there, dear child," Uncle Timothy had said, patting her shoulder, and greatly distressed. "Never mind, never mind. If you can't get up I'll bring him in to see you here. I promise I will . . . But the pull these chaps have over you little women," he went on, half to himself. . . .

The panelling creaked. Of course, it always did in these old houses. She was of that order of apprehensive, slightly nervous people who do not believe in ghosts, but all the same hope devoutly they may never see one. Surely it was a long time since anyone had visited her; it would be hours, she supposed, before the girl who had the room next her own, into which a communicating door comfortingly led, came up to bed. If she rang, it took a minute or two before anyone reached her from the remote servants' quarters. There ought soon, she thought, to be a housemaid about the corridor outside, tidying up the bedrooms, putting coal on the fires, and making suchlike companionable noises. That would be

pleasant. How bored one got in bed anyhow, and how dreadful it was, how unbearably dreadful it was, that she should be stuck in bed now, missing everything, missing every bit of the glorious glowing time that was slipping away down there. At that she had to begin swallowing her tears again.

With a sudden burst of sound, a storm of clapping and laughter, the heavy door at the foot of the big stairs swung open and closed. Footsteps came upstairs and she heard men's voices approaching. Uncle Timothy. He knocked at the door ajar.

"Come in," she cried gladly. With him was a quiet-faced, greyish-haired man of middle-age. Then Uncle had sent for the doctor after all!

"Here is another of your young worshippers, Mr. East," said Uncle Timothy.

Mr. East! She realised in a flash that she had expected him in purple brocade, powdered hair, and ruffles of fine lace. Her Uncle smiled at her disconcerted face.

"She doesn't seem to recognise you, Mr. East," said Uncle Timothy.

"Of course I do," she declared bravely, and sat up, flushed with excitement and her feverishness, bright-eyed and with ruffled hair. Indeed she began to see the stage hero she remembered and the kindly-faced man before her flow together like a composite portrait. There was the little nod of the head, there was the chin, yes! and the eyes, now she came to look at them. "Why were they all clapping you?" she asked.

"Because I had just promised to frighten them out of their wits," replied Mr. East. "Oh! How?"

"Mr. East," said Uncle Timothy, "is going to dress up as our long-lost ghost and give us a really shuddering time of it downstairs."

"Are you?" cried the girl with all the fierce desire that only a girl can utter in her voice. "Oh! Why am I ill like this, Uncle Timothy? I'm not really ill. Can't you see I'm better? I've been in bed all day. I'm perfectly well. Can't I come down, Uncle dear—can't I?"

In her excitement she was half out of bed. "There, there, child," soothed Uncle Timothy, hastily smoothing the bed-clothes and trying to tuck her in.

"But can't I?"

"Of course, if you want to be theroughly frightened, frightened out of your wits, mind you——" began Percival East.

"I do, I do," she cried, bouncing up and down in her bed.

"I'll come and show myself when I'm

dressed up, before I go down."

"Oh, please, please," she cried back, radiantly. A private performance all to herself! "Will you be perfectly awful?" she laughed exultantly.

"As ever I can," smiled Mr. East, and turned to follow Uncle Timothy out of the room. "You know," he said, holding the door and looking back at her with mock seriousness, "I shall look rather horrid I expect. Are you sure you won't mind?"

"Mind—when it's you?" laughed the girl. He went out of the room, shutting the door. "Rum-ti-tum, ti-ty," she hummed gaily,

and wriggled down into her bed-clothes again, straightened the sheet over her chest

and prepared to wait.

She lay quietly for some time, with a smile on her face, thinking of Percival East and fitting his grave kindly face back into its various dramatic settings. She was quite satisfied with him. She began to go over in her mind in detail the last play in which she had seen him act. How splendid he had looked when he fought the duel! She couldn't imagine him gruesome, she thought. What would he do with himself?

Whatever he did, she wasn't going to be frightened. He shouldn't be able to boast that he had frightened *her*. Uncle Timothy would be there too, she supposed. Would he?

Footsteps went past her door outside, along the corridor, and died away. The big door at the end of the stairs opened and clanged shut.

Uncle Timothy had gone down.

She waited on.

A log, burnt through the middle to a ruddy thread, fell suddenly in two tumbling pieces on the hearth. She started at the sound. How quiet everything was. How much longer would he be, she wondered? The fire wanted making up, the pieces of wood collecting. Should she ring? But he might come in just when the servant was mending the fire, and that would spoil his entry. The fire could wait. . . .

The room was very still, and, with the fallen fire, darker. She heard no more any sound at all from downstairs. That was because her door was shut. All day it had been open, but now the last slender link that held her to downstairs was broken.

The lamp flame gave a sudden fitful leap. Why? Was it going out? Was it?—no. She hoped he wouldn't jump out at her,

but of course he wouldn't. Anyhow, what ever he did she wouldn't be frightened. really frightened. Forewarned is forearmed.

Was that a sound? She started up, her

eyes on the door. Nothing.

But surely the door had minutely moved, it did not sit back quite so close into its frame! Perhaps it—— She was sure it had moved. Yes, it had moved—opened an inch, and slowly, as she watched, she saw a thread of light grow between the edge of the door and its frame; grow almost imperceptibly wider, and stop.

He could never come through that? It must have yawned open of its own accord. Her heart began to beat rather quickly. She could see only the upper part of the door, the foot of her bed hid the lower third....

Her attention tightened. Suddenly, as suddenly as a pistol-shot, she saw that there was a figure like a dwarf near the wall, between the door and the fireplace. It was a cloaked figure, little higher than the table. How did he do it? It was moving slowly, very slowly, towards the fire, as if it was quite unconscious of her; it was wrapped about in a cloak that trailed, with a slouched hat on its head bent down to its shoulders. She gripped the clothes with her hands, it was so queer, so unexpected; she gave a little gasping laugh to break the tension of the silence—to show she appreciated him.

The dwarf stopped dead at the sound, and turned its face round to her.

Oh, but she was frightened! It was a dead white face, a long pointed face hunched between its shoulders; there was no colour in the eyes that stared at her! How did he do it, how did he do it? It was too good. She laughed again nervously, and with a clutch of terror that she could not control she saw the creature move out of the shadow and come towards her. She braced herself with all her might, she mustn't be frightened by a bit of acting—he was coming nearer, it was horrible, horrible—right up to her bed—

She flung her head beneath her bedclothes. Whether she screamed or not she never knew. . . .

Someone was rapping at her door, speaking cheerily. She took her head out of the clothes with a revulsion of shame at her fright. The horrible little creature was gone! Mr. East was speaking at her door. What was it he was saying? What?

"I'm ready now," he said. "Shall I

come in, and begin?"



"He was coming nearer, it was horrible, horrible—right up to her bed."

# MYRA HESS

# A PERSONAL STUDY OF A GREAT ENGLISH PIANIST

### • By WATSON LYLE •

T is rather remarkable that an alleged "unmusical" nation like ours can, in Myra Hess, claim to have produced one of the few great women pianists the world has I nown.

In the history of music the pianists who have stood head and shoulders above their compeers, in conceptive powers and technical brilliance, have far oftener been men than women. The why and wherefore of this has interesting aspects, quite outside the scope of this article, but I do not think we shall be right in hastily concluding that the reasons for the secondary position of women in this medium of artistic expression are mainly traceable to physical weakness. Lack of concatenation between the requisite high mental powers and romantic outlook with (in past times) conventional prejudices, have probably been contributory causes to the scarcity of "big" women pianists. Arabella Goddard, Clara Schumann, Janotha, Sophie Menter, and Thérèsa Carreño were alone among their masculine companions on the same artistic heights. Yet, in our time, when the physique of women often equals that of man, and the sexes are similarly free in their choice of a career, the fact persists that the women who are, internationally, in the front rank of pianists would not need more than the bigger half of the proverbial hand for their enumeration. In this small company is Myra Hess. About her art is that quality that raises it above the mark of the unusually good, and gives it the imprint of genius.

This superb artist is a Londoner by birth, and of British parentage, her Teutonic name being a legacy from her paternal grandfather. She received her musical education in London, beginning (at the age of seven) at the Guildhall School of Music, continuing at the Royal Academy of Music,

and then as a pupil of Mr. Tobias Matthay, from whom she received the greater part of her pianistic training. She is thus a living refutation of the notion that Britain can neither produce first-class musicians nor educate them. Very early in childhood her musical bent manifested itself. never appeared as a prodigy, for which she is very thankful to-day; but she did play once in public, although not professionally, when seven years old. On that occasion she played a composition by Hummel, whose music is practically fergotten now, although he was not only a friend of Beethoven, but by many regarded as a quite considerable rival of the great composer in the years when both claimed attention as virtuosi of the pianoforte.

The professional début of Miss Hess, in Queen's Hall, was not made until her seventeenth year, after the laying of a sound technical foundation, as indicated above, on which to build her reputation as a solo artist. Her capacity for hard work was formed then. Not only did she continue her studies, but as soon as the necessary knowledge had been acquired, she worked hard at teaching, to support herself and further her career. Sir (then Mr.) Thomas Beecham, it is interesting to recall, made his first appearance in Queen's Hall as a conductor at that first concert of hers. She played the Beethoven G major and the Saint-Saëns (4th) C minor concerti, with the orchestra under his direction.

Struggles in the early life of an artist are by no means rare. It is difficult to think of anyone who has attained to the heights of his art (in music, or otherwise) who has not had to fight for recognition in one way or another. But, rightly looked at, every struggle is an experience, an additional quota of knowledge, helping

towards the ultimate goal of a secure triumph.

A nature inherently retiring, and sensitive to the opinions of others, like that of Myra Hess, is apt to find the pathway of art more than usually difficult. One feels that some force, greater than her early training and her will to work, must have sustained her in her determination to go on; and the longer one knows her the better does one realise that this force is nothing more nor less than her inalienable devotion to her For her its vestal flame burns with undiminished clearness. Her interpretations are free from the dross of sentimentality and the smoke of mere virtuosic display. The unusual power she has of holding the attention of her hearers may be attributed to this preoccupation with what she is playing: or rather, one should say, with the spiritual content of what she is playing.

Her home is in London, conveniently placed in the North-West district, and yet so quietly situated that when sitting in her studio, with its glimpse of a smallish, but unconventionally planned garden beyond, one might, for the quietude of the place, be miles away in the country.

It is a cultured environment, the home of a woman who loves beautiful things, and is in close touch with contemporary life and thought: a quiet place, a studio indeed, but not the conventual retreat of a recluse.

The somewhat stiff dignity of her bearing when she comes on to the concert platform gives way, in private life, to an impression of graceful assurance. Although the expression of her face is calm, and even serious, in repose her fine eyes and sensitive mouth quickly reflect whatever humorous suggestion there may be in the conversation. When she expresses a decided opinion upon an important matter, one feels it to be the outcome of careful thought and no mere hasty summing up; but when the conversation is of lighter things, she can be just as charmingly irresponsible. By sad experience she has learnt to distrust the newspaper interviewer, the type of journalist who must, willy-nilly, bag a "story" of some kind for his paper. As she remarked demurely to me one day, her life has not held any happenings that make good copy for newspaper men. She is not married, nor has she been robbed of jewels in the traditional manner of the prima-donne. Her nearest approach to "fame" of that kind was an annoying, commonplace

burglary of her house by quite businesslike burglars who left everything in a state of aggravating chaos. The matter was merely handed to the police for attention without the accompaniment of newspaper headlines. Miss Hess feels therefore that her career scarcely represents popular "news" interest, but Transatlantic music critics devote as much attention to her art as do those of her own country. Apropos the latter, she was considerably surprised and amused to receive the other day a letter from a Gold Coast native couched in terms of extreme admiration for herself and her art—an enthusiasm, it appeared, that was simply the result of seeing her photograph in a London Sunday paper. I have seen a good many letters of this description from unknown coloured correspondents to prominent people, and in them, as in this one, the writer seemed to think it necessary to protest undying devotion merely to obtain some article, such as a book, a gramophone, or some such thing, free. As I read this letter I felt I should come upon a snag somewhere. Surely enough it came, quite skilfully worked into the middle of the second page of extravagant devotion; and it took the form of a request for "one harmonium tutor, which to your discretion is the best to hand, or that which I prefer, 'The American Tutor.'" Artless simplicity, indeed! Truly, that dusky youth of eighteen deserves to succeed in his own country. If I remember rightly, the wished-for Tutor was sent him anonymously by the kind-hearted pianist.

Every winter Miss Hess gives an extended recital tour in the United States and Canada. She has visited also Belgium, all the principal centres in Holland and Germany, as well as Buda-pesth, Prague, and, of course, Paris, thus expanding her British reputation into an international one.

The physical strain is tremendous: bad enough at home, where the artist may be playing in Glasgow or Edinburgh one day, and the next in the Midlands, in London, or even farther South, say in Bournemouth, but positively exhausting on an American tour, when the pianist may be rushed from one town to another, a thousand miles or so distant, to fulfil her engagements. This kind of thing is representative of the strenuous conditions of life experienced by most famous musicians, especially if they are instrumental soloists, during four to five months of the twelve. Although the period may not be continuous, the wonder

remains that sufficient unbroken sleep is obtained to keep the recitalist fit.

When one thinks of her art, recollections crowd the memory of packed audiences at the Proms., tensely listening to her performance as soloist in a concerto, and showing their appreciation in unmistakable There is the no less keen enthusiasm in the more sophisticated atmosphere of a Philharmonic audience. Yet it cannot be said that her personal magnetism remains at the same level. The fusion of her individuality with the individualities of her hearers varies, and is, so to say, in a state of flux. At its highest-which is usual—it is, as I have indicated, extraordinarily powerful; at its lowest, her performance is still that of a fine artist. From which it will be seen that her playing is. in its essence, a reflection of her emotional condition of the moment, and is therefore consistently individual in its appeal. It is never stereotyped, never mechanical. are always conscious of a strong, intellectual control. Her emotional expression is ever the servant of her mental powers. Whether this control is exercised consciously, or subconsciously, does not, in the final issue, greatly matter, but we shall probably not be far wrong if we attribute her exceptional artistic gifts to this unusual synchronism of head and heart, working sympathetically with her nice perception of tonal beauty and her sensitive imagination.

Severely - self-critical and difficult to satisfy in her interpretative ideas, she will, when she feels the need, continue to work on into the night in her studio at the preparation of her programmes. She is a firm believer in working, at the creative aspects of one's art, only when the mood is there; but she is also an equally strong believer in the disciplinary value of daily work which, when the artist is not in the mood, must necessarily consist of details of subsidiary interest, such as technique, the planning of new programmes, and so forth. Her aversion from the limited stock repertoire of many pianists, consisting of one or two concerti, and one or two groups of smaller pieces, playing which they tour Europe, and sometimes America, year after year, makes her work harder than that of the average soloist.

Practically everything is committed to memory. Only once have I seen her play in public from score, and then it was for a performance of the pianoforte part in Scriabin's "Prometheus"—music that it

would be sheer waste of time to memorise. taking the extreme difficulty of the task in conjunction with the rarity of its performance. But when a new work possesses a definite solo interest for pianoforte, or is for pianoforte alone, she brings to it as much zeal in preparation, in memorising, and in getting right to the soul of the music. as if it were already an acknowledged big work, her performance of which would challenge the interpretations given by past and present virtuosi of the keyboard. looking through the programmes of her recitals for the last ten years or so, and of the concerts where her playing has represented the main solo attraction, one is surprised to find the large number of composers, some of them with established reputations, others comparatively unknown, who are under debt to Miss Hess for performances of new works, and in many cases first performances. There is no other pianist of her standing, British or foreign, playing regularly in London season after season. who seems to have the courage to do such a thing. Most of those who might, because of their prestige, venture to act the fairy godparent to new works are content to wander but little from the beaten track. They dig out some composition one hundred and fifty to two hundred years old, fine enough in its way, perhaps, but no finer than dozens of others of the same period, and no more deserving of attention because of that than a representative work by a contemporary composer who has a better right to be heard since he is alive and. presumably, is capable of feeling the pleasure that all creative artists feel when their work is sincerely appreciated.

Courage is necessary in sponsoring new works—the courage to face critical dicta, and the courage of risking a drop in the boxoffice receipts. The majority of people go to concerts because the programme set forth contains music that is already familiar to them. Fully aware of this, many recitalists play for safety all the way by presenting hackneyed item after hackneyed item, and one familiar programme after another. Alas, that both public and pianists of this calibre seem to forget the obvious fact that there was a time when the names of even Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Chopin were unknown, and but for the courage of somebody or other in first playing them, and (what is equally important) of others in first listening to them, we of to-day would know nothing of the sublime beauty of

their music. The pioneers in interpretative musical art fulfilled a high purpose then, and earlier, and for their descendants of to-day who, like Myra Hess, have an idealistic regard for their music, it may be necessary to function in similar fashion towards some of the music that is being written in our time. It may be objected, of course, that the four masters named played their own solo works a good deal in public. This was but natural, and usually happens when the composer happens also to be an executive artist of concert standard. We could match the situation to-day with Rachmaninov, de Falla, Bax, and Bartok, divergent types of writers who frequently play their own works in public. Then, as now, however, the composer can bring his music forward only to the comparatively few who are specially attracted by his work, and he must rely upon the co-operation of other interpretative artists to widen the sphere of public apprecia-

Myra Hess loves the "classics," all of which find regular place in her programmes. If she can be accused of favouritism, it would be for Bach. Into her playing of him there is infused a sublimely spiritual emotion. Her arrangement of his cantata, "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," is much played by other pianists, including Iréne Scharrer. Brahms, from her, is Brahms made vital and easily comprehended. Her Mozart discovers the deeper emotions as well as the sunnier qualities of his piano music. The same might be said of her Beethoven, who loses nothing of his strength or his divine qualities at her hands. Her Chopin is neither effeminate nor brutalised; he is a poet, and the rhythmic interplay in the Etudes, the Valses, and the Préludes finds understanding response from her. Schumann, also, owes to her many fine readings of the "Kinderschenen," "Carnival," and the piano Concerto in A minor. Schubert's piano works, seldom played, have not been neglected by her. Among the modern "classics" (by which is meant that the composers write in the classical tradition) one immediately thinks of the grandeur of her Rachmaninov in his concerto in C minor. and her ascetic regard for form in Franck's Variations Symphoniques for piano and orchestra. Debussy, de Falla, Granados, Albeniz, and Ravel are all regularly played, and finely played, by her. She has given first performances to works for her instrument by the following composers:-Frank Bridge, Sonata; Bax, Sonata in F Sharp Minor (1917 revised version); Ernest Bloch, Concerto Grossi; Vincent d'Indy, Sonata in E Major; Ravel (with Jelly d'Aranyi), Sonata in G Major for violin and pianoforte. More than anyone else Miss Hess introduced to us here the spiritually classic art of César Franck.

Collaboration in chamber music has always presented great attractions for Miss Hess. Last autumn she was in Glasgow with the London String Quartet, playing every night for a week chamber music, and groups of soli, and on each night a different programme. Immediately before this there was a recital of her own; immediately after it another, and an appearance as soloist at the third of the B.B.C. National concerts, as well as other lesser engagements, before she could leave for her winter tour in America.

Realising this wide, esthetic vista, and remembering the perfection of insight and of performance she brings to whatever she plays, one's memory goes back to treasured recollections of Carreño, and to the glamour surviving to this day around the pianistic art of Clara Schumann.

## A HOUSE WITHOUT A CAT.

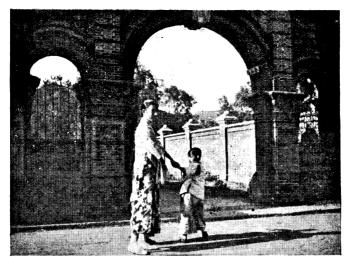
A HOUSE without a cat
Is most extremely flat,
Like a friend without a chat,
Or a door without a mat,
Or a chop without its fat,
Or a ball without a bat,
Or a whale without a sprat,
Or a vault without a vat,
Or a girl without a hat,
And even worse than that
Is a house without a cat.
DOROTHY DICKINSON.



AS OTHERS SEE US.

THE COLONEL: Get out of my way, madam, with that child of yours.

THE LADY: Child yourself—playing with that little ball, and in those ridiculous short trousers, too! Go home to your ma!



A GIRL AND HER LITTLE SISTER IN A MODERN HOME IN HANGCHOW.

# WE GO SHOPPING • IN CHINA •

By LADY HOSIE

Author of "Two Gentlemen of China," etc.

TADE STREET in Canton, silk warehouses in Hangchow, fairy lanterns swinging in Lantern Lane, Peking: from north to south China's fascinations are bewildering. Despite wars and revolutions, a craftsman has to live, which he cannot do in any comfort unless shops display their wares and the fruit of his workmanship. East to West alike. The exquisite drawnthreadwork of Soochow, near Shanghai, is rivalled by the embroidery of Chengtu, the capital of a province two thousand miles west from that Manchester of the East. To reach Chengtu you must travel for weeks up the great River Yangtsze, which is so wide near its mouth that you cannot see across it; but which, a thousand miles up its course, is compressed and rushes between its famous Gorges. To-day steamers strain and pant and breast the swirling whirlpools of its upper waters, not without risk. Not so long ago, however, you would have had to make the journey by slow junk. Even yet you must

watch the junksmen tugging and hauling the heavily-laden boats. In an agony of toil, impossible elsewhere than in China, they pull their great barges round the rocky promontories, in the teeth of the remorseless waters. They conquer the river by dint of sheer patience, by their numbers, by the sweat of their naked bodies: and they look askance at its conquest by the steamboat which is slowly but inevitably ousting them from their place. Soon they will have to turn to steam or seek a living elsewhere—in Singapore, the Philippines, Penang: yet always the River will be their Father and their Mother.

As in mediæval times, in the true Chinese city shops of a trade are to be found in the one quarter. A whole street in Chengtu, far in the heart of Szechwan Province, is given up to open shops in which small boys lean over big embroidery frames, putting in stitch after stitch; milk-white silk here for the sheen of a peony, a thread of gold there for the burnished claw of a phœnix. One

3 в

long lane in Canton sells and makes nothing but fans—if it has escaped the ruin wrought in that city by the strike pickets, the Communists and over-zealous anti-Communists who have in turn laid waste its various quarters. Fans of every description, each more attractive than the last: fans made of eaglewing pinions, or of peacock-eye feathers to keep away the evil-eye: fans of thinnest silk, with landscapes or quatrains of verses painted upon their translucence; priceless fans with carved ivory sticks, palm-leaf fans with handles mounted in tortoiseshell, or just a plain poor man's fan of woven rush.

shops, except by such a little bit of the glass window! How much better is it out East where you go down the street and can see what everybody is doing, what they are eating, and what they are making!"

So in Canton you can see nearly all the contents of a furniture shop at one glance, without going in. You can go from one shop to another and compare with ease. The system has advantages. Of course the greatest treasures are hidden at the back for the connoisseur, but you usually catch a glimpse even of these from the street.

"Look at the glorious wood of that plain,



[Underwood.

STREET TRADERS, PEKING.

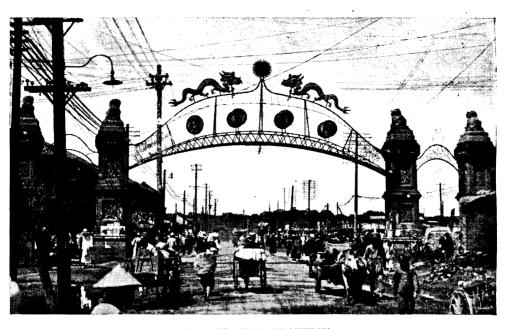
Another street in Canton sells only black-wood. There, craftsmen are staining and rubbing the beautiful iron-hard, iron-heavy rosewood brought by junk from Burmese forests, till it looks like ebony. They pierce and drill and carve under your eyes in dark little shops, dark because the streets are so narrow, though the whole front of the shop is taken down each morning.

"What a strange place is England!" said a Eurasian girl, whose father was English and whose mother Chinese, when she went back and talked about it to her Eurasian friends. "In English towns all the housedoors are shut! Shut! You cannot see into English houses at all, or into English polished, low opium table," I whisper to my husband: "and that straight, severe Chinese desk—with its sole ornament a foot-rest in Greek key pattern."

"What ravishes me is this chair," he answers, and stops before a miracle of loving care, a chair on the back of which dragons, pierced deep into the wood, seem to chase each other, and the arms of which are twisting playing dolphins.

"How much is this all the arms of which are twisting playing dolphins.

"How much is this chair?" I ask the plump, smooth-faced shop-owner, while the artisan, clad only in his blue cotton trousers, stops his primitive drill to listen. The shopman hesitates a minute, and my husband gives a smile.



THE MAIN STREET OF MUKDEN.

Modern China indeed! Telephone wires and electric standards, but the rickshaws and country carts are far from our standards of progress. Human labour is the dearest labour in the long run, and a "rickshaw civilisation" means great human waste.



[Underwood.

STREET SCENE, PEKING.

The country carter is just paying for his simple but tasty meal—bowls of well-cooked dumplings in boiling hot soup, with pieces of green spring onions to relish.

"I hope you know you have just asked him the price of soap," he nods at me. I have given a wrong inflection to my voice. It is alarmingly easy to make mistakes in Chinese: and my mistake is not to be compared with that of an English scoutmaster who was mustering his little troop of Chinese boys for an international parade and discovered that every detachment except own was provided with its national flag. He ran into a Chinese shop.

"I want seven Chinese wives," he announced breathlessly, "and will you please get me them at once as I am in a hurry?"

Chinese shopkeepers have long become used to the vagaries of Western



[Underwood.

# A BOY OF TWELVE CARRYING COAL. Coal is dug out and carried in this laborious manner to market or to private houses. Child labour is a sorely perplexing problem in the East.

speakers of their language, and their intuition is remarkable. But this time the Chinese thought that much scouting had turned the white man madder than usual. There were farcical scenes till one of the little Chinese scouts came inquiring on his own account.

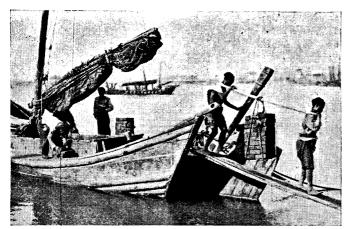
Housewives in China have many shopping difficulties. The foreign woman up-country makes out long lists of groceries to be sent her at seasons convenient for the ships or mule-packs or man-carriers who bring them to her. But other shopping problems are solved in unexpected and happy ways.

In Manchuria they buy their fish in winter frozen solid in sea-water. There it lies as though alive in a block of ice. In Hongkong, a thousand miles south, it really is alive. There are great carp ponds near Canton, where the breeding of carp has been brought to a fine art through many generations. When the fish reach the right age, and the right pond, they are scooped up and thrown into boats full of flowing river-water. This is easily managed. Plugs are



A LANTERN SHOP, PEKING.

When the Feast of Lanterns approaches, how can you help buying a lantern like a big fat gold-fish, with eyes and a tail that are set moving by the warmth when the candle inside is lit?



[Underwood.

UNLOADING A CHINESE JUNK, TSING-TAU.

pulled out of two holes fore and aft of the sampan, and the river flows in naturally, the little boat sinking lower and lower into the water till almost submerged. Thus the boat is rowed, heavily, with its fish swimming in its narrow confines, to the side of the steamer waiting to go to Hongkong. The best market is there for such fish, not only among the foreigners but among the innumerable wealthy Chinese who live on that beautiful rocky island. The fish are scooped out a second time, struggling, flopping, by means of long-handled ladles, into tanks of water on board the ship. When the docks of Hongkong are reached the carp are seized upon a third time by coolies, who fling them into great wicker baskets slung on a shoulder-pole between two of them. Then the coolies rush through the streets at top-speed, every now and then a fish leaping high into the air, till they reach the tanks in the market. Everyone stands aside for the fresh-fish porters in Hongkong: and very rarely do the fish die or come to harm on the way.

"I dread going back to Shameen this autumn," said a pretty young English wife to me last spring. Shameen is the little low sandy island separated from Canton city by a narrow canal. "I cannot tell you how dreadful it often was at night during the perpetual boycotts they have been indulging in there. We would hear a shot; then a shriek or a groan; and know that it was some poor fisherman who had been caught trying to get his fish on board a vessel bound for Hongkong."

"Did not the fishermen approve of their fellow-Cantonese strikers who wanted to boycott the British and Hongkong?" I asked.

"Of course not," said she: "they were the worst sufferers. Nobody in Canton was left who could afford to buy their



A STREET IN HANGCHOW,

the centre of the silk industry. Outside the congested central areas wide macadamised roads were built years ago, and are still well kept. From all the lamp-posts hang maxims in blue and white enamel. Confucian quotations in the old days, Nationalistic injunctions to-day,

The strikers often took it from carp. them for a mere trifle which did not pay for the rent of the ponds. So, night after night, though they knew the strikepickets were waiting for them, they would steal to the foreign ships and try to smuggle their fish on board. Sometimes they would band together and catch a stray member of the strike-picket.

"Well, what happened?" I asked.
"More shrieks, and worse," said she; "and I was only a bride and did so want everyone to be happy. A mutilated body would come floating along in the morning tied into a pig-basket, which of course was

a deadly insult to the corpse."

With what relief, then, does the mind return to the charms and fascinations which are so much more the essential China of our love than these nightmare doings of a mere handful of her baser sort! In twenty years' time one could not come to the end of the enchantments of Canton's shops, or the admiration which wells up in one's soul at the skill and artistry of her craftsmen. At the silversmith's a worker clad in homely blue cotton, with infinitely delicate touch, will be laying tiny turquoise-blue morsels of kingfisher feathers on to a silver pendant. In a shanty whither my husband led me two old men were preparing the thin strips of



A MANCHU PRINCE IN HIS OLD-STYLE ROBES.



A MANCHU PRINCESS IN FULL REGALIA.

pith-paper, shaved from the inside of a certain bamboo, on which they would later paint the quaintly stiff Chinese young man and maiden, or bouquet of flowers, which our grandmothers with seafaring relatives hung up on their drawing-room walls.

"We are the last of our trade," they said mournfully: "nobody wants our art now-

adavs."

The same fascinations hold good for Peking, away up there in the north. Markets are held every ten days in certain temple courtyards. At the Lung Fu Ssu I was bargaining one day for a heavy brass incense bowl. In the midst of the bargaining I went for a little walk into another courtyard, and found a pious old lady burning incense in the great temple bronze censer at the door of the gods' shrine. Bevies of small urchins accompany the foreign shopper and find entire satisfaction, apparently, in coming quite close and looking up without a blink for moments into her face. It is no sort of use losing her temper. If she chaffs them, and smiles a little, she may persuade them to pose round one of the carved "lion-dogs" whose gambollings have been caught and fixed in stone by so many appreciative Chinese sculptors. This posing wearies them as much as it wearies a posse of English children, and thus is she delivered from their too fervid attentions.

"T'ai T'ai!—lady!" said one shyly to me one day, as I left the fair, and put a little flower into my hand: "Foreign ladies like flowers." And he shook his head and refused the tiny coin I tried to give him in return for his courtesy.

Outside the Hatamen—the Tartar Gate—

foreign taste. Further up the lane are the bead shops. Morning after morning these little marts are the resort of English and American women, for the "beads" are of semi-precious stones. Here are lumps of matrix turquoise, such as are loved by both men and women in Tibet, mother-of-pearl



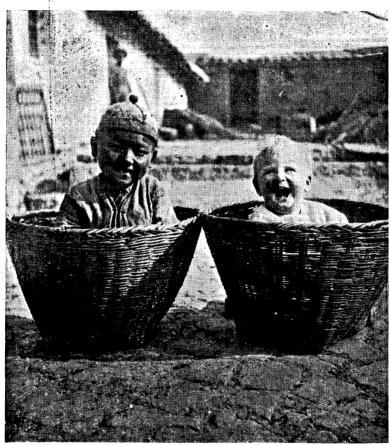
A CHINESE GENERAL.

Though wearing modern uniform, with modern decorations, he is of the old school, and bases his tactics on the *Three Kingdoms*, a historical novel of the thirteenth century.

is a street known to the foreign female shopping population as Bead Street; to the Chinese as Flower Street, for a few shops at its entrance, just inside the arch, sell artificial flowers. Chinese ladies like to pin these into their chignons, and the bright colours look charming against their "coal-black hair," though they are too brilliant to please

pendants carved by the Mongolian lamas into the shape of "Buddha's hand," amber necklaces that give their glowing fire best under the fierce light of an electric bulb, and amethysts set as eardrops. Two or three cleverfingered young artisans string the beads, and make dainty mountings round and about the pendants with the smallest of seed-pearls. Nowhere else in the wide world can they do it as well as here in Bead Street, Peking—not even in China. If you break your chain—and they are well made—and take it to a Chinese elsewhere, he shakes his head; and you make a nuisance of yourself to your friends in Peking by asking them to have it mended for you. Yet it is never a nuisance, you know quite well, to spend half a morning in those irresistible "bead" shops.

or American spectacles. However, a clangclang comes to your ears; it is the blacksmith at his ancient trade of mending iron kettles. Through the open door comes a glimpse of him, half naked, blowing his little forge, attended by his boy satellites. A brass-shop next door gleams with the butterfly brass locks which will fasten the red boxes containing some Chinese bride's trousseau. They are so exquisitely wrought, yet



[Underwood.

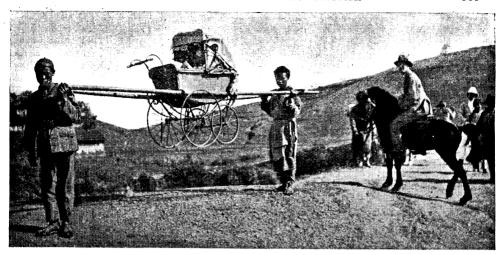
GOOD COMPANY.

In these two baskets some Chinese market gardener daily carries his produce to market, one at each end of his shoulderpole. He has an unusual load on this occasion!

Out in the Hatamen Street, where is a side track ankle-deep in black dust for the camels and mules to walk in and kick up, you find Modernity swooping upon Old China. Here are shops bursting into vast expanses of plate glass in their prosperity, as a tree bursts into leaf in full summer. How beautiful in comparison seem the old gilded carved shop-fronts! You may buy oillamps in these new shops, or electric fittings,

so strong, that you go into the narrow, crowded shop to bargain for them. Your skirt brushes against a pair of trumpets standing on the wooden floor, five feet long if an inch, slender and tapering as a wand, ready to be blown at the same bride's wedding procession.

There is a wonderful mingling of strength and delicacy in China. A thick high wall will be topped with a fretted trellis of brick-

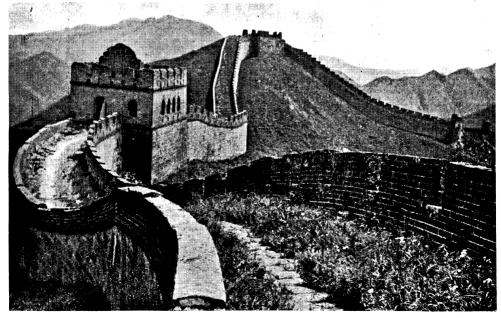


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A LITTLE WHITE BABY GOES A JOURNEY CHINESE FASHION. There are no roads over Chinese hills and dales, only paths where folk must walk single-file.

The general of olden times, Meng T'ien, who built most of the Great Wall, that monument of laborious effort and solid masonry which stretches for three thousand miles across North China, was also the inventor of the camel's-hair paint-brush, the most dainty, soft and yielding of all man's appliances. Just inside the Hatamen is a modern photograph shop. It displays its

wares in the window, and the most arresting photograph is of the Great Wall uncoiling its dragon length over mountains and passes. Outside sits a public letter-writer. As you stand looking at the Wall, you may see a coolie in his short cotton breeches come to this long-gowned, bespectacled master of Chinese caligraphy and make salutation.
"Elder-Born!" he says politely, "my



[Underwood.

A SECTION OF THE GREAT WALL.

It climbs over the steepest mountains. In places twenty to thirty bastions are in sight,

mother is getting old, and I constantly have my heart's thoughts upon her. Will you please write her a letter for me to say so? I have entrusted some money for her to the Post Office, and the clerk there said it would surely reach her, but this seems almost too wonderful to be. How can they send money along those wires? So I want to know if ther, is buying his rickshaw on the hire system and hopes to complete his purchase by the fifth moon and will then think of taking a wife, as she suggests, so that she may have grandsons. And I hope the rains have fallen sufficiently so that the millet-heads in the southern acre are beginning to fill."

The letter-writer questions and disen-



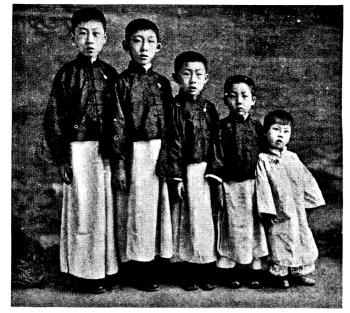
[Underwood.

GROUP OF PEASANT CHILDREN, PEKING. The number of those who wear pigtails grows less every year.

she receives it safely. He said the money itself would not go, but that there would be a piece of paper which she must exchange. It is all very astonishing, and your Younger Brother has no skill to understand. Tell her, too, that my Within-One has a third child, but it is only a female—a useless mouth: and that her younger son, my bro-

tangles the main facts from the rambling talk. Then he gets out his sheets of thin Chinese paper, ruled downwards, not across like ours. He rubs his stick of solidified ink into a little water. He takes up his pen, like that very same camel's-hair paint-brush invented by General Meng T'ien of Great Wall fame so many hundreds of years ago.

Quickly he paints in downward straight lines the characters which will go to a village in a corner of the province and tell an old woman of her coolie son's remembrance of his home. She will not be able to read the letter, of course, but there will surely be one person in the vil-



SONS OF A CHINESE SCHOLAR.

The five Happinesses of Li Cheng.

lage who can help her out.

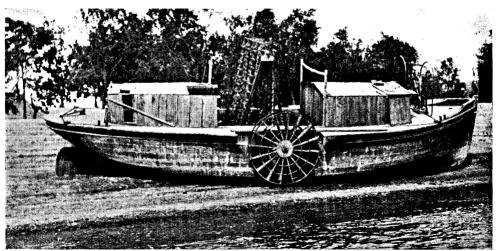
The letter-writer pockets his little fee; then takes out a foreign cigarette and puffs away contentedly, while he awaits another customer.

There are, of course, as many sections of society in China as in Europe; and shops and wares to suit them all. There are the Rich, the Poor, the Middle-Classes. Some of

each class are worthy of all honour: and some are as idle and good-fornothing as here. One of the prettiest sights is a Chinese father of the working - classes out with his little boy, dressed in his best. which nowadays often includes a hat fondly thought to be foreign style. Chinese are in-

dulgent parents. Perambulators have not yet reached many Chinese homes: so when there is some special function it is the father who carries his baby along the street: and with what pride and tenderness!

In contrast, you may see dashing along the streets of Peking at the most furious pace some "General," whose knowledge of tactics is that of primitive clan warfare, but who



[Underwood.

A PADDLE BOAT WORKED BY COOLIES.

The men run up the ladder to make the "wheels go round."

nevertheless in these days scorns every vehicle but a closed upholstered motor-car. Not only does his soldier chauffeur honkhonk without intermission, but a dinner-bell, like that of a fire-engine, swings its clapper unceasingly to announce the coming of His Importance. Two soldiers, rifles slung on backs, ride one on each footboard, clinging to the roof of the car. By rights they ought to be looking as dignified as butlers; but of necessity they are, instead, holding on their hats in the fierce gale of their onslaught. They are also beaming with pleasure in the rapid motion. the windowed car, His Importance holds himself as stiffly and correctly as he imagines his subordinates on the footboard are doing. He is in khaki suiting of good superfine Yorkshire wool. Needless to say, every human being scutters out of the way, to the side of the road. The police in their grey cotton uniforms, carrying rifles, leap for safety like The clanging passes. the rest of us.

"A Field-Marshal?" I call to my friend, Li Cheng, with whom I am going to visit the cloisonné shops. His rickshaw had drawn in to the side only just in time. In another



TWO MODERN CHINESE COLLEGE GIRLS, TIENTSIN.



AN OLD TEACHER IN WINTER CLOTHES, WITH HIS WATER-PIPE.

minute we arrive at our destination, so can converse while our rickshaw men mop their streaming necks and faces.

"Field-Marshal!" snorts Li Cheng. "Some underling summoned to a conference of his superiors and anxious to make the world think they can't do without him. If he had been of higher rank, he would have had six soldiers clinging to the roof of his car. If he had been a really Great Man, as Great Men go these days, he would never come out amongst us of the populace at all. Or if he did, he would have a whole brigade scattered over the route to guard his precious life."

"But, Li Cheng," I demurred, "look at his gold epaulettes, the white feather blowing in his cocked hat!" The fact was, I could not help sympathising with the General's childish delight in his whirlwind progress. "It is rather amusing to be rushed to the side of the street at the approach of these generals, 'like leaves in autumn fleeing,'" said I.

"It is an amusement that palls on the inhabitants of China," he answered dourly. "To think that that is our new aristocracy! No doubt he is rolling in wealth, all illgotten: yet can't read or write. The only consolation is that he is probably led by the nose by his secretary, did he but know it. And so we of the educated classes get our



Photo by]

DENTAL SURGERY IN THE STREET.

[Underwood.

revenge, and some day may save our country. He has to depend on our advice after all."

Li Cheng, you see, is of the New Poor. His family was of the most aristocratic in the days when China's aristocracy was that of literature and statesmanship.

"And look at those two young soldiers on the footboard!" he continued.

"They look quite good-natured," I murmured.

"A lazy lot!" he scoffed.
"They've joined the army to escape doing any work."

The duties of a Chinese soldier, it is true, are in inverse ratio to his responsibilities. They do not include any polishing of his buttons, very little drill, and hardly

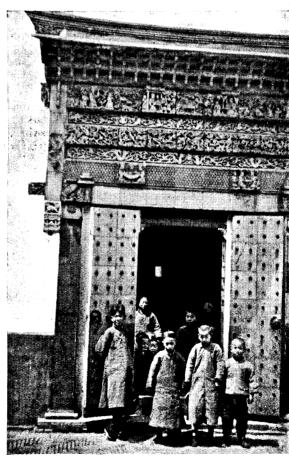
any rifle-cleaning.

"Food, clothing, a roof over their heads—that is all they want," said Li Cheng. "Of course it is hard that they never receive their just pay, except perhaps half of it, six months late, to keep them quiet. But that does not excuse their habit of pointing a rifle at some poor innocent farmer and robbing him of his little savings. He may be thankful if they do not burn the roof over his head as a memento of their visit, or make him carry their accoutrement and bedding for twenty miles."

We went into the cloisonné shop, where the master craftsman was making a set of finger-bowls for my husband and myself, more or less after our own wishes.

"Our Chinese name, Hsieh, in the bottom," I had said, "then dragons in gold and royal blue chasing each other among clouds within the bowl. What of the outside now, do you think?"

"Egg-shell blue and little waves of the sea," he suggested after deep thought. And so it was, and I never look at them without thinking of him in that shieling in Peking,



AT THE GATE OF THE OLD FAMILY MANSION THE STREET CHILDREN LIKE TO PLAY.



[Underwood.

LITTLE BOY BLUE.

He is dressed in his best to go and visit his Grandmamma.
"Foreign babies wear hats, so why not try the effect on
my baby boy this summer," says his Chinese mother,
"since Father is willing to pay?"

where so much beauty is sent forth from so unpretentious a dwelling. Like a little brown seed, what delicacies of green leaf, of white petals, have not issued from within its covering husk?

As we came out, a string of camels was swinging down the road. Their noose-ropes dangled from their noses; they looked very much like supercilious old ladies gazing at the world through lorgnettes. On their backs were no poet's treasures of silken

carpets or caskets of gems, but plain household coal, of very good quality. Till the advent of foreign machinery, coal-mining was done in the most primitive way in China. Holes, without ventilating shafts, without props, were driven into the earth, sometimes a mile long. The air was unspeakably foul: the heat almost intolerable. There were no lifts. The coal was brought to the surface on the backs of men, or more often young boys. Bending double under their awful weight, these sad children toiled, and still toil to this very day, faces drawn in the anguish of their effort, up hundreds of steps finally to the blessed light. Practically naked, they stream with sweat.

But I refused to be too downcast, for a shop had caught my eye. It

was an alluring shoe-shop: a woman's shoe-shop.

Only seven short years ago, I vow there was not a single woman's shoe-shop in the whole of China. There are not great numbers of them yet: but every year will see more. In old days, Chinese women embroidered their own torturing slippers. It is much more tedious and requires greater skill to make shoes for natural feet. Besides, leather shoes wear longer than silk or cotton.

There were so many Chinese ladies wanting to buy shoes in one shoe-shop in Tientsin that I had to wait in a queue when I wanted to try a pair—the joy of it! Very hard to please they were, too, only wanting the most elegant varieties and preferring the ornate. At the moment the fashion is for black glacé kid, trimmed and inlet with white kid in rice-ear patterns: and for low heels, but pointed toes. The pointed toes are suitable enough for feet that have been bound and are only just emerging from their wrappings.

"What are you so pleased about?"

asked Li Cheng.

"That shoe-shop," I answered. "It will take some time for the little feet of Chinese women to walk in the new shoes: it may even hurt them at first, so used are they to their bonds. But strength will come in time. That shoe-shop! It is the harbinger of a Great Deliverance."

"Perhaps it is the right symbol for our Mother China, after all," said Li Cheng.



[Underwood

RICE PLANTATIONS ON A TERRACED MOUNTAIN SIDE.

# JOHN AND JANE

## By EDEN PHILLPOTTS

ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON

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If you be built on a grand scale, there's always people to feel the greatness, and though, when you hap to be a knave, their respect is a bit one-sided, still there it is: greatness will be granted.

In the case of John Warner, he weren't a knave, but his greatness, so to call it, took the form of such a complete and wondrous selfishness that you was bound to own a touch of genius in the masterful way he bent all things to his purpose and came out top over his neighbours. The man was an only son, and what might have been chastened in his youth was fostered by a silly mother. who fell in love with his fine appearance and never denied him a pleasure she could grant. And his father weren't no wiser, so when, at five-and-twenty, he found himself an orphan and Wych Elm Farm his own. lock, stock and barrel, young John Warner come to his kingdom with a steadfast determination to get the best he could for himself out of life and make it run to his own pattern so far as unsleeping wit of man could do.

He married a pretty woman with a bit of money and he altered a good few of his father's ways and used Jane Slowcombe's dowry to buy up a hundred acres alongside his own. The land had been neglected and wanted patience and cash; but where his lasting interests were concerned, John never lacked for one, nor stinted the other. He was a clever man and a charming man, and his cleverness and his charm appeared in many ways. Over the steel hand of sleepless selfishness John drew the velvet glove of good manners and nice speech. He created the false idea that he never wanted to do more than give and take in the properest spirit you could wish. He spoke the comfortablest words ever a farmer did speak to his fellow-creatures, and many a man was lost afore he knew it when doing business with John Warner, and never realised, till it came to the turn, how a bargain which sounded so well had somehow gone against him after all.

Of course John prospered exceeding, for, amongst his other gifts, he weren't afraid of work. He knew his business very well indeed and always understood that it was worth his while to take pains with a beginner and paid him in the long run so to do. People felt a good bit interested in him, and though they knew there was a lot to hate in the man, yet they couldn't give a name to it exactly. When a fallen foe was furious and bearded John and shook a fist in his face. as sometimes happened, he looked the picture of sorrow and amazement and expressed his undving regrets. But he never went back on nothing, and near though he might sail to the wind, none ever had a handle by which to drag him before the Law. just the very genius of selfishness that sped him on his way victorious every time.

He never took no hand in public affairs, nor offered for the Borough Council, nor nothing like that. He might have been a useful man in Little Silver, where we didn't boast more brains than we needed, nor yet enough; but John Warner said he weren't one of the clever ones and felt very satisfied with them that were, and applauded such men as did a bit of work for nothing out of their public spirit. For praise, though cheap, is always welcome, and he had a great art to be generous with what cost him nothing.

He'd pay a man a thought above his market value if he judged him worth it, and he often said that on a farm like Wych Elm, where everything was carried out on the highest grade of farming, 'twas money in any young man's pocket to come to him at all. And nobody could deny that either. And he never meddled in his neighbours' affairs, or offered advice, or unfavourably criticised anything that happened outside his own boundaries.

One daughter only John Warner had, and that was all his family, and her mother struck the first stroke against his happiness and content, for she died and left him a widower at five-and-forty. She fell in a consumption, much to his regret, after they'd been wedded fifteen years; and their girl was called Jane after her, and 'twas noted that though sprung of such handsome parents, Jane didn't favour either but promised to be a very homely woman—a promise she fulfilled.

Her father trained her most industrious to be his right hand, and she grew up with a lively admiration for him and his opinions. Farming interested her a lot, and men likewise interested her; but among the hopeful young blades with an eye on the future who offered to keep company and so on, there was none Jane saw who promised to be a patch on her parent, and after his worldly wisdom and grasp of life and shrewd sense, she found the boys of her own age no better than birds in a hedge. Indeed she had no use for any among 'em; but made John Warner her god, as he meant she should do: for, as she waxed in strength and wits, he felt her a strong right hand. In fact, he took no small pains to identify her with himself for his own convenience, and secretly determined she shouldn't wed if he could help it. Little by little he poisoned her mind against matrimony, praised the independent women and showed how such were better off every way, with no husband and family to fret their lives and spoil their freedom. And Jane, who was by nature the neuter type herself, found his opinion to chime very well with her own.

She was one- or two-and-twenty by now—a pale, small-eyed maiden with a fine, strong body and a great appetite for manual work. There was no taint from her mother in her and she lived out of doors for choice and loved a hard job. She'd pile the drybuilt, granite walls with any man and do so much as him in a day; and folk, looking on her, foretold that she'd be rich beyond dreams, but never know how to get a pennyworth of pleasure out of all her money.

For they neuters be bleak in their nature as a rule and little prone to giving or taking the happiness that Providence may offer. Females they are, no doubt, yet, as 'Moleskin' the poacher used to say, "'women' be too grand a name for 'em."

But Jane's one and only idol was her father, and for him she would have done anything in her power. She counted on him being good to live for ever, along of his cautious habits, and she'd give over all thought of any change in the home when the crash came and the even ripple of their

lives was broke for her by a very unexpected happening.

Because, much to his own astonishment. John Warner found his mind dwelling on a wife once more—the last thing as ever he expected to happen to him. Indeed the discovery flustered the man not a little, and he set himself to consider such an upheaval most careful and weigh it, as he weighed everything, in the scales of his own future comfort and success. He was a calculating man in all things, and yet it came over him gradual and sure that Mrs. Bascombe had got something to her which made a most forcible appeal and awakened fires he thought were gone out for ever when his wife died. As for Nelly Bascombe, she was a widow and kept a shop-of-all-sorts in Little Silver and did well thereat, and Bascombe had been dead two years when his discovery dropped like a bolt out of a clear sky on John Warner.

It vexed him a bit at first and he put it away, after considering what an upstore a second wife would make in the snug and well-ordered scheme of his existence; but there it was and Nelly wouldn't be put away. So John examined the facts and came to the interesting conclusion that, in a manner of speaking, his own daughter was responsible for his fix. Because, being such a wintry fashion of female, she made all others of the sex shine by contrast, and her father guessed it was just her manly, hard, bustling way that showed up the feminine softness and charming voice and general appealing qualities of Nelly Bascombe.

Nelly was a tall, fine woman of forty years old. Her hair was thick and dark. her eyes a wondrous big pair and so grey as the mist, and her voice to poor Jane's was like a blackbird against a guinea-fowl. Farmer, he dropped in the shop pretty often to pass the time of day and measure her up; and for her part, being a man-loving sort of woman, who had lost a good husband, but didn't see no very stark cause why she shouldn't find another, she discovered after a bit what was lurking in the farmer's mind. Then, like the rest of the parish, she wondered, for 'twas never thought that such an own-self man as Warner, and one so well suited by his daughter, would spoil his peace with another wife.

But nobody's cleverer to hide his nature than a lover, and Warner found himself burrowing into Nelly's life a bit and sizing up her character, though full of caution not to commit himself; and she was very near as clever as him, and got to weigh up his points, good and bad, and to feel along with such a man that life might be pleasant enough for a nature like to hers. For she was a good manager with a saving disposition. She liked John's handsome appearance well enough and reckoned the fifteen year between 'em would work to suit her. And, more than that, she hated her business, because a shop-of-all-sorts have got a smell to it like nothing else on earth, and Nelly found it cast her spirits down a bit as it always had done. She made no secret of this and John Warner presently got to see she was friendly disposed towards him and

with all her might any other female reigning at Wych Elm but herself.

And meanwhile, all unknown to farmer, Jane chanced to be having a bit of very mild amusement with a male on her own account.

Martin Ball was known as 'the busy man of Little Silver,' and none but had a good word for him. He was a yellow-whiskered, stout, red-faced and blue-eyed chap with enough energy to drive a steamship. The folk marvelled how he found time for all he undertook. He was Port-reeve of the district—an ancient title without much to it nowadays—and he was huckster to a dozen



"She was . . . a pale, small-eyed maiden with a fine, strong body and a great appetite for manual work."

might easily be had for the asking if he asked right. He took his time, however, and sounded Jane, where he well knew the pinch would be like to come.

He gleaned her opinion casual on the subject of a woman here and there, and he found Jane thought well enough of Mrs. Bascombe, whose shop was useful and her prices well within reason. But it was a long time before he made up his mind, the problem being whether to tell Jane of the thing he was minded to do before he done it, or take the step first and break it to her after. In the end he reckoned it safer to do the deed and announce it as an accomplished fact; because he very well knew that she would take it a good bit to heart and hate

farms for Okehampton Market. He also kept bees and coneys and ran a market garden of two acres. He served on the Parish Council and he was vicar's warden. And numberless other small chores with money to 'em he also undertook and performed most successful. And then, at forty-two years of age, though not before, he began to feel a wife might be worked into his life with advantage, and only regretted the needful time to find and court the woman.

And even so, but for the temper of his old aunt, Mary Ball, who kept house for him, he would have been content to carry on single-handed.

He knew the Warners very well and Jane had always made a great impression on him by reason of her fearless ways and great powers and passionate love of work; and though he came to see very soon that work was her only passion, beyond her devoted attachment to her father, yet he couldn't but mark that such a woman would be worth a gold-mine to any man who weren't disposed to put womanly qualities first. love he knew less than one of his working bees, but maybe had a dim vision at the back of his mind about it, which showed him clear enough that with Jane Warner, love-making could never amount to much. He measured the one against t'other, however, and felt upon the whole that such a woman would be a tower of strength if she could only be got away from her parent.

And so he showed her how he was a good bit interested, and had speech with her, off and on, and made it pretty clear in his scant leisure that she could come to him if she was minded. It pleased her a good bit to find such a remarkable man as Ball had found time to think upon her, and she also liked his opinions and his valiant hunger for hard work. She'd even let herself think of him for five minutes sometimes before she went to sleep of a night, and what there was of woman in her felt a mild satisfaction to know there lived a man on earth she'd got the power to interest. Marriage was far outside her scheme, of course; but there's a lot that wouldn't marry for a fortune, yet feel a good bit uplifted to know they might do so and a male exists who thinks 'em worth while.

So Jane praised Martin Ball and let him see, as far as her nature allowed, that she thought well of him and his opinions and manner of life; and he began to believe he might get her.

He touched it very light indeed to John Warner one day when they met coming home on horse-back, and then he found himself up against a rock, for when he hinted that Warner would be losing his wonderful daughter some time, the farmer told him that was the very last thing on earth could ever happen.

"Never," said John Warner. "The likes of her be her father's child to her boots. I'm her life, Ball, and there's no thought of marriage in her, nor never will be so long as I'm above-ground. She ain't that sort anyhow, and I'm glad of it."

He wanted it both ways, you see. In his grand powers of selfishness, John had planned to have Nelly for wife by now, and he'd also planned to keep his daughter, well

knowing that no wife would do a quarter of what Jane did, or be so valuable on a business basis. Jane for business and Nelly Bascombe for pleasure was his idea:

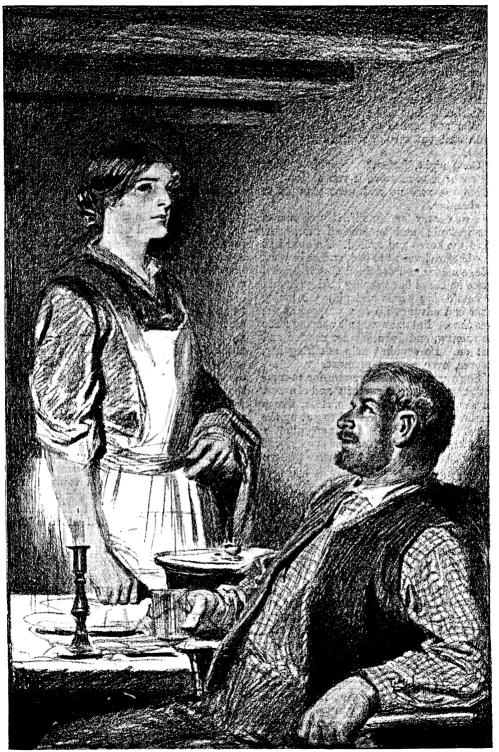
And then John offered for Mrs. Bascombe.

after making it clear to her that he was going to do so and finding the running good. He put it in his masterly language and said that he'd be her willing slave, and hinted how, when he was gathered home, the farm would be her own for life and so on; and while knowing very well that John weren't going to be her slave or nothing like that, Mrs. Bascombe · reckoned the adventure about worth while, having took a fancy to him and longing most furious to escape the shopof-all-sorts. And so she said "Yes," though hiding a doubt all the time, and Warner, who hated to have any trouble hanging over him, swore he was a blessed and a fortunate man, kissed her on the lips, and went home instanter to tell Jane the news. He broke it when supper was done and they sat alone —her darning and him mixing his 'nightcap,' which was a drop of Hollands, a lump of sugar and a squeeze of lemon in hot water. "I've got glad news for you, Jane," he said. "Long I've felt 'twas a cheerless life for you without another woman to share your days on a footing of affection and friendship and-more for your sake than my own—I've ordained to wed again. Not till I heard you praise her did I allow my, thoughts to dwell on Mrs. Bascombe, but getting better acquaint, I found her all you said, and more. A woman of very fine character-so fearless and just such a touzer, for work as yourself, and, in a word, seeing that you did ought to have a fellow-woman to share your labours and lighten your load, I approached her and she's took me. And I thank God for it, because you and her will be my right and left hand henceforward; and the three of us be like to pull amazing well together. 'Tis a great advancement for Wych Elm in my judgment, and I will that the advantage shall be first of all for you.

cious girl, and wish me luck."

She heard him out with her little eyes on his face and her darning dropped and her jaw dropped also, as if she'd been struck dead. But he expected something like that, because he very well knew Jane would hate the news and make a rare upstore about it. He was all for a short battle and very wishful to go to bed the conqueror. But he did not. Jane hadn't got his mellow flow of words, nor yet his charming touches when

Drink a drop out of my toddy, my own pre-



"'Good night, father,' she said. 'Us'll talk about it to-morrow, if you please.'"

he wanted his way over a job; but she shared a good bit of his brain-power and she grasped at this fatal moment, with the future sagging under her feet, that she'd never be able to put up no fight nor hold her own that night. In fact, she knew, as we all do, that you can't do yourself justice after you've been knocked all ends up by a thunderbolt. But she kept her nerve and her wits and looked at him and shut her mouth and put up her work in her workbasket.

"Good night, father," she said. "Us'll talk about it to-morrow, if you please."

Then she rose up and went straight to her chamber.

He was sorry for himself, though not at all surprised; and he finished his liquor, locked the house and retired. An hour had passed before he went to bed, and he listened at Jane's door and ordained that if by evil chance he heard her weeping he'd go in and say comforting words and play the loving father and advance his own purpose at the same time. But Jane weren't weeping: she was snoring, and John Warner nodded and went on. He couldn't help admiring her, however, even at that moment.

"She's saving all her powers for to-morrow," thought Jane's parent; and she was. She slept according to her custom, like a dormouse, and woke refreshed to put up the fight of her life. They got to it after breakfast, when the house-place was empty, and Warner soon found that, if he were to have his will, 'twould be needful to call on the Powers to help him.

Jane didn't waste no time, and if her father had astonished her, she had quite so fine a surprise for him after she'd thought

it all over and collected herself.

"'Tis in a nutshell," she said. life I've put you afore everything on earth but my Maker, and I was minded so to continue. I've been everything any daughter ever was to a father, and you have stood to me for my waking and sleeping thought ever since I could think at all. And now you want me to go under in my home and see another take my place. Well, dad, that's your look-out, of course, and if you think Mrs. Bascombe will be more useful to you than me, then take her. But I'll say here and now, please, that if you be going to marry, I shall leave Wych Elm for good and all, because I couldn't endure for another woman to be over me and closer to your interests than what I am. Never, never could I endure it. Is that quite clear?"

He looked at her and filled his tobacco

pipe while he done so.

"'So clear as can be, Jane," he said. "'Tis like your fine courage and affection to feel so. But I make bold to believe you haven't weighed this come-along-of-it same as I have, and find yourself getting up in the air too soon. I could no more see Wych Elm without you than I could see myself without you, and the affection I feel for Mrs. Bascombe is on a different footing altogether. Love of a wife and love of a daughter don't clash at all. They be different things, and she would no more come between me and you and our lifelong devotion than love of man would come between you and me."

He flowed on like that, so clever as need be, and she listened with a face that didn't show a spark of the thought behind it. But he failed to move her an inch, because, unknown to him, she'd got a fine trump card

up her sleeve, of course.

He saw presently that he wasn't making no progress and sighed a good bit and turned on a pathetic note, which he had at command, and blew his nose once or twice; but these little touches didn't move Jane, so he ventured to ask her what her future ideas might be away from Wych Elm, if

such a fearful thing was thinkable.

"God, He knows," said John Warner, "as I never thought to be up against life like this, and find myself called to choose by you, who was the apple of my very eye, between a wife and an only child; but since you can have the heart to come between me and a natural affection towards Mrs. Bascombe, may I venture to ask, dear Jane, what your own plans might be if you could bring yourself to do such a deed as to leave me?"

"That's easy," she answered. "If your love for me was not strong enough to conquer your love for Nelly Bascombe, then I'm very much afraid, father, my love for you might go down in its turn, before my feelings for another man. In a word, dad, if I felt I wasn't the queen of your home no more, I should turn my attention to being queen of another."

He stared at that.

"Never heard anything more interesting, dear child," he said. "'Tis a wonderful picture to see you reigning away from Wych Elm. But though I'm sure there's a dozen men would thank God for such a wife as you, I can't but feel in these hard times that few struggling bachelors would be equal even to such a rare woman, unless it was in her

power to bring 'em something besides her fine self."

She smiled at that and rather expected it.

"I thought you'd remind me how it stood and I was a pauper if you so willed," she replied. "But we needn't go into figures, because the man I'm aiming at knows you very well, and he'll quite understand that if he was to get me away from you, there won't be no flags flying when I go to him, nor yet any marriage portion. He ain't what you might call a struggling bachelor, however, but a pretty snug man by general accounts."

"And who might he be, I wonder?" asked John; because in his heart he didn't believe for a moment there was any such a man in the world; and when Jane declined to name Martin Ball, her father was more than ever convinced that she was bluffing.

"We will suffer a month to pass, Jane," he told her. "Let a full month go by for us to see where we stand and get the situation clear in our minds. Certain it is that nought that could happen will ever cloud my undying affection for you, and I well know I'm the star also to which your fine, daughterly devotions turn. So let this high matter be dead between us till four weeks have slipped by."

"Like your sense to suggest it," she answered.

And the subject weren't named again between 'em till somebody else named it.

But meantime John didn't hesitate to take the affair in strict secrecy to the woman who had promised to wed him; and when the engagement was known, of course Martin Ball struck while the iron was hot and felt a great bound of hope that Jane would now look upon him with very different eyes. And even while he hoped, his spirit sank a bit now and again in her company. But he put the weak side away and told himself that love was at best a fleeting passion.

Jane didn't say much to him herself, because in truth she would have a thousand times sooner bided at Wych Elm with her parent than wed the busy man of Little Silver; but Martin screwed himself to the pinch and urged her to let there be a double wedding. He found her very evasive, however, for hope hadn't died in Jane and she knew by a good few signs her father was hating the thought of losing her. The idea of Jane away from Wych Elm caused him a lot of deep inconvenience, and Nelly Bascombe seemingly weren't so much on his

side as he had hoped. Of course the woman well knew that life at Wych Elm would be far more unrestful with Jane than without her, and so she rather took the maiden's view and tried to make John see it might be better if his girl was to leave 'em. this she did because it happened, after a week had passed, she knew a lot more about the truth than Mr. Warner could. He still clung to the hope that Jane was lying and that no man wanted her; and even if such a man existed, John, well understanding that his daughter was not the sort to fill the male eye in herself, doubted not that the lover would soon cry off if he heard Jane's prospects were gone. He voiced this great truth to Nelly Bascombe, and he'd have been a good bit surprised to know that on the very day he did so, she reported his intentions word for word to the man most interested. Because, when the situation unfolded, Martin Ball had gone to Mrs. Bascombe in hope to get some useful aid from her.

They were acquaint, because Nelly sold Ball's honey in her shop, but more than that Martin didn't know of the woman. She had a good name for sense, however, and when he heard that she had taken Warner, he saw what her power must now be in that quarter and asked for a tell in private. Which she was agreeable to give him, and in truth they saw each other a good few times and traversed over the situation most careful.

Nelly had a way to understand men and she listened to Martin and liked the frank fashion he faced life. He was honest as the day, though fretting a bit because Jane Warner wouldn't say "yes" and be done with it. He'd wanted to go to her father, too, and let John know his hopes; but that Jane wouldn't allow at this stage of the affair.

"In fact, she won't let me whisper a word," said Martin to Mrs. Bascombe, "and 'tis treason to her in a way my coming to you at all; but I feel terrible sure you can help, and it looks as if it would all be right and regular and suit everybody if she was to take me and leave the coast clear for you when you wed her parent."

"It does look like that to a plain sight," admitted Nelly, "but in truth things be very different. And for your confidence, in strict secrecy, I can give you mine. Warner don't want her to go. He badly wants me and her both, while, for her part, she don't want to go and hates the thought; but,

so far, she's determined to do so if I come."

"That ain't love, however," argued Mr.

"It ain't," admitted Nelly Bascombe, "and you mustn't fox yourself to think the very roots if I went to Wych Elm at farmer's right hand, where naturally I should be."

Mr. Ball listened and nodded, and his blue eyes rested upon Mrs. Bascombe's grey ones.



"Martin Ball had gone to Mrs. Bascombe in hope to get some useful aid from her."

she'll come to you for love. A good helper she'd be to any man in her own way; but she belongs to the order of women who can't love as wife should love husband. She do love as daughter can love father, however, and it's very clear to me that John Warner is her life in a manner of speaking. On the other hand, it would upset her existence to

"You throw a great light," he said. "In a word, there was deeper reasons far than any growing affection for me that have made her so on-coming of late?"

"God forbid as I should suggest such a thing as that," answered Nelly. "You're a sort of man to please any woman, if I may say so; but I'm only telling you what lies in her mind. And I'll say more in fairness to the both of you. Her father don't believe there is a man after her at all. Jane's just sitting on the fence, in fact, and waiting to see if she can't shake him off me. And if I'm turned down, then you'll be turned down. 'Tis rather amusing in a way."

"It may be, but I ain't much one for a

"I would," declared Mr. Ball. "I can tell you, without self-conceit or any such thing, that where I loved I'd stick, and the woman as shared my life would share my all. There's a lot in me only hid because nothing have yet happened to draw it out. I'm busy and I'm wishful to do my little bit of work in the world for other people;



joke," he confessed, and then went on. "Though too busy for love-making and all that, yet I've got my pride, Mrs. Bascombe, and I shouldn't like to be taken as a last resort—amusing though it might be."

"No man would," she answered. "And I hope I'm wrong. She may be turning to you for your good qualities. She may be coming for affection after all, knowing you'd prove a very fine husband."

but if I was married, my home would be a dear thought to me, and my wife would find herself first always and her comfort and happiness a lot more to me than my own. 'My home' I call it, but it have long been borne in upon me that a home is a hollow word with nought in it but an aunt such as Mary Ball. It may be like blowing my own trumpet, and I wouldn't say it save in an understanding ear; but I do think

Jane Warner would find I was good

enough.''

"She certainly would," admitted Nelly; and deep in her heart, such was her powers of perspection, she couldn't help contrasting Martin's simple nature and open praise of himself with John Warner's cleverer speechifying and far more downy and secret mind.

After that Ball and the widow met a good few times unknown to the farmer and his daughter, and there's no doubt that the more Martin saw of Mrs. Bascombe, the more impressed he felt with her good sense. They couldn't advance each other's interests, however, for all Nelly was able to tell him amounted to nothing. John revealed to her that Jane hadn't taken no steps to relieve the situation, but that she still asserted that she'd got a man up her sleeve; while all Martin could say was that Jane held off and marked time and wouldn't decide for or against.

"At the end of a month," explained

"At the end of a month," explained Nelly, "John Warner is to get on to Jane again. He's death on her stopping at Wych Elm; but she's given no sign that she will stop if I come. I may also tell you that she's been to see me on the subject and given it as her opinion I'll be doing a very rash act to go to Wych Elm. She says I'll live to find out a lot about her wonderful father as might surprise me painfully."

"And for her part to me," replied Martin Ball, "she says I'm still in her mind as a husband, but there's a good bit to consider and I mustn't name the thing again till she do. In a word, she's still tore in half between her father and me. And I don't like it too well, because, little though I know of love, I feel a screw's loose somewhere still."

Nelly looked at Martin, in doubt whether to tell him something more, or not. But her woman's mind decided to tell him.

"And another curious fact," she said, "I do believe, at the bottom of his mind, which is deep as a well, her father's torn in half between me and her also!"

His blue eyes goggled at that.

"God's goodness!" he cried. "He knows what love is surely—even if she don't. You

must be dreaming, woman."

"No," she answered. "You don't dream much at forty years old. He thinks to hide it—my John does—so to call him. But I see it very plain indeed. He knows what amazing gifts his daughter have got, and he knows she's vital to Wych Elm; but he don't know what gifts I have got to put against 'em, and so I do believe that deep

out of sight he's weighing her parts against mine."

"That ain't love, however," vowed Martin.
"Tis one love weighed against another," she told him. "A man over fifty don't love like a boy."

"The depths of human nature!" cried Mr. Ball. "I never thought that such things could be. It looks to me, Mrs. Bascombe, as if—— However, I'm too loyal to say it. But you do give one ideas."

"Like father like daughter, I shouldn't

wonder," she said thoughtfully.

"Just the same dark fear as was in my mind," he confessed.

He left her then in a mizmaze of deep reflections; but he didn't go until they'd ordained to meet again. A considerable lot more of each other they did see afore the fateful month was done, and the more easily they came together because John Warner began to be very much occupied with Jane at this season. The fourth week had very near sped and still she remained firm; while behind the scenes, when he did see her, John found no help from Nelly Bascombe. In fact he marked that she'd got to grow rather impatient on the subject and didn't appear to be so interested in her fate, or yet his, as formerly.

So things came to a climax mighty fast, and while Warner, who didn't know what it was to be beat where his own comfort was concerned, kept on remorseless at Jane, she hardened her heart more and more against him and finally took the plunge and told Martin Ball as she'd wed when he pleased. He hadn't seen her much for ten days owing to press of business, and when she made up her mind, 'twas she had to write and bid him go walking with her. But he agreed at once so to do and came at the appointed evening hour. And then, afore she had time to speak, he cried out as he'd got a bit of cheerful news for her.

"And I've got a bit of cheerful news for you," said Jane Warner, though not in a very cheerful tone of voice. And then, in a dreary sort of way, she broke her decision.

"Father's going to marry the woman at the shop-of-all-sorts, as you know," explained Jane; "and if him, why not me? And, be it as it will, you've said so oft you could do with me that——"

She stopped to let him praise God and bless her and fall on her neck; but, a good bit to her astonishment, Martin didn't show no joy at all—far from it. He was silent as the grave for a minute, and then he only axed a question that didn't seem to bear much on the subject.

"Your father haven't seen Mrs. Bascombe

to-day, then ?" he said.

"Not for a week have he seen her, I believe, but he's been a good bit occupied and worried. He was going to sup with her to-night," answered Jane. "And that's why for I asked you to meet me, Martin."

"What a world!" mused Mr. Ball; and he bided silent so long that the woman grew

hot.

"You don't appear to have heard me," she told him pretty sharp, and then he spoke.

"I heard you only too well," he replied.
"If my memory serves me, it's exactly three weeks now since last I offered for you, Jane, and your answer was a thought

be taking a snack with Nelly this evening he'll make good every word I'm telling you. In fact, I dare say what you have now got to pretend is bad news, Jane, be really very much the opposite. There's only one person is called to suffer to-night so far as I know, and that's John Warner. And even he may not suffer so much as he did ought. He put Mrs. Bascombe afore you, and so you ordained to keep your threat and leave him. And you come to me to take you and make good your threat."

"You didn't ought to put it like that—it ain't decent," she said. But she knew, of

course, she'd lost the man.

"It don't matter now," he replied, "because human nature overthrows decency and delights in surprises—decent and otherwise.

### LOVE'S BRIGHT INFINITY.

WOULD not have when I am dead A tall white stone above my head, To make perpetual my name, Nor where I dwelt, nor whence I came.

Dust unto dust . . . I am content. Let me lie still when all is spent; Let the wild grasses rustle high Spring after Spring where I shall lie.

I am content to fall and pass And crumble 'neath the silver grass, So one brown bird in one green tree Proclaim love's bright infinity.

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A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.

frosty. In fact, you dared me to name the subject again until you might be pleased to."

"Well, and now I do name it," she told

"Why, if I may ask?" he said.

'Twas her turn to be silent now. Of course she saw in a moment that things had gone wrong, and she instantly guessed, knowing her father, that 'twas he had made up a deep plot against her behind her back and called the man off her.

So sure felt she that she named it.

"This be father's work," she "You've changed your mind, Ball."

"Minds have been changed," he admitted, "and not only mine. But make no mistake, Jane. This has got nothing whatever to de with your father so far as I'm concerned. You've been frank, as you always are, and I'll be the same. And if Mr. Warner

What has happened is this. Me and Nelly Bascombe was equally interested in your family, and along of that common interest and seeing a lot of each other and unfolding our opinions, we got equally interested in one another. And then nature cut the knot. Jane, and, in a word, I darned soon found I liked Nelly Bascombe a lot better than ever I liked you, if you'll excuse my saying so; and, what was a lot more to the purpose, she discovered how she liked me oceans deeper than she liked your father."

"My goodness!" cried Miss Warner. "That's the brightest news I've heard this longful time, you blessed man! Oh, Martin, can you get her away from father? I'll love you in real earnest—to my dying day I

will—if you can!"

She sparkled out like that and amazed him yet again.

"I have got her away," he said. "And that's what Mr. Warner's going to hear from Nelly to-night, so brace yourself

against he comes home."

And that's what John did hear, of course, put in woman's nice language. First he was terrible amused to learn that Ball had come courting Nelly because, when he thought on Jane, it looked as if he had been right and she was only putting up a fancied lover to fright him. In fact, he beamed upon Mrs. Bascombe so far, for it looked as though everything was coming his way as usual after all.

But he stopped beaming when she went on and explained that she was forty and Martin Ball forty-two, and that she'd come to feel Providence had planned everything, and how, only too bitter sure, she felt that Martin was her proper partner, and that John would find his good daughter a far more lasting consolation and support than ever she could hope to be at her best.

John Warner had never been known to use a crooked word, and he didn't then. He made no fuss nor yet uproar, for he was a wonder at never wasting an ounce of energy on a lost cause. He only asked one question.

"Are you dead sure of what you're saying, Nelly?" he inquired, looking in her eyes; and she answered that, though cruel grieved to give such a man a pang, she was yet convinced to the roots of her being it must be so.

Then she wept, and he said 'twas vain to work up any excitement on the subject, and that he doubted not it would be all much the same a hundred years hence. And she granted that he was right as usual.

So he left her, and Martin Ball waited, hid behind the hedge, to see him go; and Jane was home before him. Then John told his daughter word for word all that had happened at the shop-of-all-sorts; and he wasn't blind to the joy that looked out of her little eyes. She didn't even say she was sorry for him, but just answered as straight as he had and confessed how she'd offered herself within the hour to Martin Ball and found that his views were very much altered and he didn't want her no more. "And God knows best, father," finished up Jane.

"So it's generally believed," he answered. 
"And nobody can prove it ain't true. For my part, you was always balanced in my mind very tender against that changeable piece, and nought but a hair turned the balance her way. 'Tis a strange experience for me not to have my will, and I feel disgraced in a manner of speaking; but, if I've lost her, I've gained you, seemingly. And I shan't squeak about it, nor yet go courting no more; and I'll venture to bet, dear Jane, you won't neither."

"Never—never," she vowed him. "hate every man on earth but you, dad."

She closed his eyes and tied up his chin twenty years after, and when she reigned at Wych Elm, she found but one difficulty—to get the rising generation of men to bide under her rule and carry on.

### OLD ENGLAND.

RARE they 'awthorns now be smellin'
White uz peers who'm now be tellin'
Aside green laanes 'ut theer white sheetenin'
'L1 linger on ter Autumn sweetenin':
'Ark they blacklebirds (they'm craaven!)
Shouten' loud uz if they'm braave an'
If yo' but stops an' looks at 'ee
They runs awaay ter tark at 'ee!

Chaffiefinches too be callin'
Roun' yon trees wi' chatt'ry fallin'
An' jumbly notes a-playin' fer hours:
See they gay banks o' gillieflowers
Waften' sweetly now 'tis breezy—
Maytime's surely sent to please 'ee!

EVERETT HODGE.

# THE PURPLE • PARROT •

### By GUY RAWLENCE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

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T T was not really purple, and to the uninitiated it was not too obviously a parrot, but to anyone who urged that no such bird was known to ornithology Rex Bristow, who had painted it, would have replied, "It's entirely decorative." Which is what all artists say when their works are criticised as bearing little resemblance to Nature. And certainly this brilliant-plumaged bird, with its purple and blue and gold feathers, was more like a parrot than, shall we say, a raven. And certainly it was decorative, perched on the branch of a tree which bore crimson flowers against a positive blaze of tropical sunshine. While, if you care about such things, the drawing was pretty good and so was the composition, the values, and the rest of the qualities which, so we are informed, go to make a decent picture.

At any rate, it had been accepted for exhibition at the Q Gallery, which was extremely gratifying not only to Rex, but to all his friends; and particularly to Daphne Colne, who was not exactly a friend, for he was engaged to be married to her. For Daphne the Purple Parrot had an especial significance. It seemed to bear on its multicoloured wings the whole of her future happiness. But somehow, in spite of her admiration for Rex's work and her conviction that he was a very great artist, she could not-or perhaps dare not-expect that anyone would be sufficiently moved by the Parrot's charms to write a cheque for fifty guineas; which was its price.

Yet this fact was of tremendous importance. On it depended whether they should be married at once or at some remote and

uncertain date.

"You see, my darling," Rex had said, "we absolutely must have a bit to start on. When we are married, of course we shall be

able to manage; there's what you get with your fashion designs, and there's my weekly cartoon in *The Looking Glass*. Enough for daily bread and butter and occasional iam——"

"And two living together is so much cheaper than two living separately," Daphne said for the hundredth time since their engagement. But always she said it with such an adorable air of discovery that Rex beamed amazement at the cleverness of her economic reasoning. He did so now.

"Yes, Daph, I expect one does save quite a lot," he agreed and smiled. But only for a moment. Then he became grave again. "Still, we must realise that there's bound to be a certain amount of extra expense to start with. You see it costs several pounds simply to be married."

"It does seem absurd that a parson should be paid simply to hear two people swear they are in love with each other," Daphne complained. "I think he ought to pay us

for letting him into a secret."

So, though it was against their desires. and their faith, they had to agree that there must be a certain amount in their pockets besides what they called regular income. Thus a great deal depended upon the Purple Parrot, for neither had any source from which could be raised the requisite sum; Daphne being, as she called it, "frightfully alone in the world," and Rex, though he had certain relations, had also what he called "a proper pride," which quality prevented him from applying to either of the two uncles who would probably have been willing to give him a handsome wedding present. But knowing the uncles' disapproval of his determination to be an artist, their gloomy prophecies regarding his failures. and indigence, nothing could prevail upon him to break the four years' silence which had elapsed since, at the age of twenty-one, they had handed over the three thousand pounds, which was the sum left to him by his father.

There were friends, of course-Jasper Fovant in particular—who would gladly have made as considerable a loan as was in their power. But Daphne was as decided as himself that the charity of friends is to be avoided at all cost. Their hopes therefore were centred upon the brilliant bird who was to be displayed on the walls of the Q Gallery.

#### II.

On the day of the private view the Gallery was filled with the crowd which customarily assembles on such occasions. Unhopeful critics, weary connoisseurs, people of both sexes vaguely belonging to what is called Society, and artists of every degree of merit, from Royal Academicians, who deal in what the younger generation consider to be conventions, to members of the younger generation who the Academicians consider deal in contortions. Among these familiar folk moved Daphne, Rex, and a number of their friends, most of whom, being concerned with art in one form or another, were usually impecunious but contrived to find life an entertaining enough spectacle, living it precariously and with a good deal of discomfort in the humbler streets of Chelsea and Blooms-

It held the centre of one wall of the Gallery and dominated its neighbours with its flaunt-



with each other,' Daphne complained."

ing colour and design. Having studied it at various angles and distances, Rex's friends clustered round him and gave their praise, as is the way when speaking to the artist himself. (It does not prevent more critical comments between one and another.)

"A glorious Polly," was Vera Costabelle's comment, looking at the picture through the single eyeglass she affected. She was on the stage; but only just, as her enemies said, for very seldom did she have a part other than in the production of obscure dramatic societies. But her enemies were few. She was hospitable and an excellent cook, contriving delicious Italian dishes over a gasring in the rooms which she inhabited above a tobacconist's shop.

"A bit thin, but pretty efficient on the whole. I like your treatment of the planes," said Wilkins, and went into a maze of technicalities, as was his way. For him painting seemed largely a question of mathematics. But he was a happy man, addicted to Brazilian cigarettes and seventeenth-century prose.

But praises of this kind were as nothing to Rex compared with Daphne's whispered, "I love it. It's wonderful."

Other people may have thought it wonderful too; certainly quite a number halted in front of the picture and appeared to be adequately impressed, but that was all. As the afternoon advanced purchases were made. Here and there pictures could be seen on the frames of which little red seals had been fixed—as might be the spots of some strangely benevolent disease—but no seal stained the frame which enclosed the Purple Parrot.

Of course, as Rex told himself, he hadn't expected that anyone would want to buy the thing straight away. But he had hoped -absurdly, as he now confessed. continued to hope; though not very much, as the days passed, and he received no information from the directors of the Q Gallery that his picture had been sold. So did Daphne continue to hope. At least when she was with Rex. Alone in her minute flat, drawing those distorted, elongated females, clad elegantly, which it was her business to draw, or lying awake in her bedroom, that was so awkwardly shaped that the head of the bed had either to be practically up the chimney or practically out of the window, she gave way to despair. marriage—that delicious sharing of expenses and all the rest of it, which she talked about so bravely—became as distant as the stars.

#### TIT.

SHE was having tea with Rex in his studio three days before the Exhibition was due to close—rather a pathetic tea, for both pretended to be more cheerful than was the case—when Jasper Fovant came in.

Now Fovant, though intimate with the little group among which Daphne and Rex lived, associated with their successes and failures, their festivities and their squabbles, was not exactly of it. For he happened to be a young man with, in the eyes of the rest of them, a considerable private income. lived luxuriously in a flat just off Sloane Street; he belonged to an expensive club; he travelled on the Continent; and though he wrote novels which enjoyed a moderate success, it was known that the proceeds of their sales were but a fraction of his expenditure. Thus, although their set liked Fovant considerably, they felt that he could not really appreciate their circumstances and all the straits and financial dilemmas in which they so frequently found themselves. Which was rather hard on Fovant, who cared much more for these denizens of inaccessible studios and lodgings than for his wealthier friends and acquaintances.

"Any tea going?" Fovant asked tentatively, standing in the door of the studio.

"One muffin and half a bun, Jasper," Daphne said, bending over the stove on which a kettle was slowly boiling.

"Splendid," Fovant declared, and coming forward peered over Rex's shoulder at the drawing-board on which he was making a random design. Rex didn't immediately look up. He was—quite unreasonably, as he admitted—somehow irritated by Jasper Fovant that afternoon. For he was envious. It seemed all wrong that a fellow like that, with no responsibilities—and no desire, it appeared, for responsibilities—should have so much cash to spend on himself. Which was really grossly unfair, for Fovant was ready enough to spend money on his friends in any direction.

But Rex couldn't be really annoyed with Jasper, as he presently found, and the meagre and impromptu tea-party continued amiably enough, ending in a pleasantly fierce argument concerning the merit of some play which they had all seen. It was not until Fovant was apparently on the point of leaving the studio, his hat and coat on, that anything out of the ordinary occurred. He began it with:

"Look here, Rex, there's something I

want to talk to you about. Really there's no need, but knowing how confoundedly obstinate you can be sometimes I thought I'd better."

"What is it?" Rex asked rather grimly. "It's about your Parrot," Fovant said. "I've told the Q people that if it's not sold when the Exhibition closes they are to send

it to me." "Jasper! How perfectly sweet of you!"

Daphne cried.

But obviously Rex did not consider it in the least sweet. In fact, he appeared to be considerably annoyed.

"Please, Daphne," he said tersely, and turned to Fovant. "It's very good of you, but it's quite impossible."

Fovant's face took on something of the

colour of his red hair.

"Wait a bit," he stammered. "Of course I want the Parrot anyhow. I'd have bought it on the day of the private view, only I thought it would be so much better-well in every way, more advertisement and all that —if some outsider bought it. I was pretty sure that they would, but if there is no one with sufficient sense to know a good picture when he sees it, I shall be jolly glad."
"I'm sorry," Rex put in, "but it's quite

out of the question. I shall write to the Q

and say the thing isn't for sale."

"Rex!" Daphne wailed.

"But I honestly want the bird," Fovant

protested.

And then everything became rather awkward. Rex was stiff with what he called his proper pride. Fovant confused, realising that he had blundered hopelessly in saying anything about the matter, and Daphne, perfectly wretched at Rex's obstinacy, trying to pacify ruffled feelings. All of them were glad when Fovant at last made his escape and the door of the studio closed behind him. Then Daphne burst into tears. "Oh, I do think you are beastly," she "Jasper wants the Parrot. I'm sure cried.

he does. Oh, you do make things difficult." And Rex climbed on a very high horse, talking a great deal about living on charity, and declaring that he'd burn the bird rather than Jasper bought it, before he did what he immensely wanted to do, which was to take Daphne in his arms and try to comfort

her.

It was the last morning of the Exhibition. Irresistibly Daphne was drawn to the Gallery. But though her faith in Rex remained unimpaired she had very little hope that his picture would now find a purchaser. And when she entered the room she had no hope at all. It was completely deserted. Almost she turned and fled. Indeed, she would probably have done so had she not suddenly felt very tired. So she sat down on the sofa which faced the end wall of the Gallery and stared at the ignored Parrot. And things were as black as they can be when you are twenty-two, very pretty and in love.

Presently Daphne heard footsteps, and looking over her shoulder, saw that a man had entered the Gallery. A tall, elderly man wearing a top-hat and a coat with a fur collar, which is so often erroneously held to be the outward sign of prosperity. At sight of this visitor hope returned. Here, thought Daphne, is a wealthy artlover. Probably a person of European reputation, just returned from abroad, who has hastened to avail himself of the last opportunity of seeing the Exhibition. Her heart leapt.

Instinctively she got up from the sofa and, standing opposite the Purple Parrot, surveyed it with rapt and enthusiastic attention. Presently the man with the fur coat approached and stood at her elbow. Whereupon she made a step forward and peered, with what she prayed was an air of expert appreciation, at the brushwork of the canvas. And finally, her trump card, she gave a little sigh and murmured, "How fearfully good!"

"H'm?" said the man behind her.

She swung round with an admirably simulated surprise and looked at the stranger inquiringly.

"I beg your pardon, I thought you were

speaking to me," he said.

Daphne smiled her very prettiest smile. "No," she said. "No, I'm sorry. It

was simply that I-well, I was so struck by this picture that I---"

"Quite," said the man, and raising a pair of pince-nez he stared at the Parrot in silence.

Daphne broke the silence. She felt she had to, that it was impossible to leave things as they were. That she would never forgive herself if the man moved on without discovering the superlative merits of the

"Don't you think it good?" she asked. "The colour is so wonderful. You seem to feel the sunshine."

And Daphne held out her hands to the canvas as if before a fire.

There was a long pause before the man spoke.

"Yes, I like it. Very interesting," he said at last.

"All his work is that," Daphne declared.

"Stimulating."

"Who is it, by the way? I haven't a catalogue," the man said.

"Bristow, you know."

"Indeed ? Rex Bristow?"

"Yes. He's getting very well known," Daphne lied valiantly.

But the man did not appear to be listening. He had returned to his contemplation of the picture.

"They seem to think he will go far," Daphne persisted. "The critics say—"

There she paused, for the critics had said practically nothing. She changed her tactics.

"You should really see more of his work," she suggested. "At his studio——"

The man turned to her with an almost scrutinising look.

"You know him?" he asked.

"Slightly," Daphne said. "I've been to his studio once or twice. 5, Constable Studios. Just off the King's Road. Really you should go."

"But probably he would not at all care to see me. These painting chaps——"

"Oh, I'm sure he would like to show you his work. If you were interested."

"I am—very," the man said. "In fact

He glanced once more at the Purple Parrot.

"I wonder what they're asking for it," he remarked.

Whereupon Daphne had to use all her control to prevent herself from behaving as if the man in the fur coat were a long-lost parent and throwing her arms round his neck. She just stopped herself.

"Of course, anything of Bristow's is a bargain. That sounds awfully commercial, doesn't it? What I mean is, all his pictures are bound to go up in value," she explained.

"You think so?"

Daphne nodded emphatically.

"Well, there's no harm in asking the

price."

"Or seeing his other work. 5, Constable Studios. Just off the King's Road," Daphne felt constrained to repeat, then regretted it. After all, one could be too persuasive.

"Thank you. I shall certainly call, and I hope that perhaps—" The man paused, looking at her keenly, a slight smile on his lips. But he did not finish his remark.

Instead he took off his hat, turned away and went towards the door marked Private which led to the room occupied by the secretary of the Q Gallery.

Daphne once more sank on the sofa, exhausted. But whereas ten minutes before she had wanted to cry from misery, now she wanted to cry from happiness.

V.

Daphne was busy that day. She had to go to Fleet Street, and elsewhere, so it was late in the afternoon before she rapped at the door of Rex's studio, eager to tell the news. He opened the door at once, and before she could say a word, "Daphne, it's all right," he cried. "The Parrot's sold. I had a telegram from the Q. Order your wedding dress!"

"But you've got to give me some credit, Rex," said Daphne quickly, conscious of a little disappointment that she was not the first to tell the news. "Of course, I know it was because the picture is so frightfully good that it was bought, but I was clever. Really I was!"

"You, darling? What had you to do with it?"

She told him of the encounter with the man in the fur coat. Rex called her marvellous, but not quite so rapturously as she had hoped he would. And she realised that —his absurd pride once more—he was a little resentful that anyone should have drawn attention to the Parrot. But when she told him the buyer was anxious to see more of his work and was in all probability coming to the studio, Rex was pacified. For the next ten minutes Daphne had never been so happy in her life.

Then a knock sounded on the door. Daphne sped to open it, for instinct told her the visitor was the purchaser of the Purple Parrot.

Instinct was correct. There he stood, hat in hand, the collar of his rather impressive coat turned up against the draught which blew down the stairs.

"As I had a free afternoon—" he began. Daphne did not allow him to finish.

"Do come in. As it happens, I was just talking about you to Mr. Bristow. He will be delighted to see you," she said, and led the way to the studio, where, to her amazement, she saw that Rex appeared to be far from delighted. Indeed, she had seldom seen him look so annoyed, so positively furious. And instead of greeting the visitor as she imagined a wealthy patron of the

arts should be greeted, he advanced towards him in a manner almost menacing, and exclaimed:

"Good Heavens, Uncle George! Was it

you who bought my picture?

Still more astonishingly the man in the fur coat replied:

ventured. "Do you know each other?"



"I first made the acquaintance of Mr. Bristow at the age of three weeks," he said "Possibly he does not remember gravely. that meeting? And from time to time we have seen one another fairly frequently, until three or four years ago, when he took up a line of action of which I did not altogether approve."

"Look here, need we go over that?"

Rex put in glumly.

"Not unless you wish," Uncle George said. "But I thought possibly this young lady-"

"We are engaged to be married," Rex volunteered.

"Exactly," said Uncle George, smiling.

"Exactly?" Daphne repeated.

"You see, you told me your secret this morning," Uncle George declared, turning to her. "Your enthusiasm—shall we call it-your championship-"



"'You don't like the Parrot?' Rex exclaimed, horrified."

"But anyone might praise the Purple Parrot. A great many people have," Daphne asserted valiantly.

"But not all of them, I presume, wore an

engagement ring," Uncle George objected.
"Oh!" Daphne cried. "You guessed?"
"I did. And for the first time, perhaps, understood that my nephew was a young man of sense and discrimination."

Then it was that Rex let himself go.

Because of what he felt to be his humiliation and his disillusionment regarding the sale of his precious Parrot he was, it must be admitted, somewhat rude, saying such things as, "Of course, I shall not allow the picture to be sold," and, "I've no intention of living on the charity of relations." And so on.

Meanwhile Daphne did not know whether to be ashamed of his churlishness or proud of his independence. It was really very difficult, for all day she had been thinking about the wedding-dress and things like that. In any case, she was sorry for Uncle George, who was, she thought, behaving with a good deal of forbearance, standing there warming his coat-tails at the stove, waiting for Rex to finish his diatribe.

At last Rex paused, his rhetoric presumably exhausted. Uncle George took his

opportunity.

"Is that all?" he inquired blandly.
"You have said a great deal and I fear I could not quite follow you in everything—"

"I thought I was quite clear," said the

young man bitterly.

"Oh, please, Rex!" Daphne besought.

"But there was one point I grasped,"
Uncle George continued unperturbed. "You stated that you would not allow the picture under discussion to be sold. I regret you will be compelled to bow to circumstance. I paid—in Bank of England notes—for the picture an hour ago, and the director permitted me, as this is the last day of the Exhibition, to take it away. You see the transaction is complete, and legally binding."

Presented thus with a fait accompli Rex found there was not much more to be said. But he pretended there was with obstinate determination. Daphne finally

interposed.

"If anyone will listen to me," she said, "I should like to say what I think about it

all. Which is, that you are taking far too much credit on yourself, Rex."

"I am ? "

Daphne nodded.

"It's quite true that Uncle George—please I must call you that, though I suppose you have another name—first of all was attracted to the Parrot long before he knew who painted it. For he went straight towards the picture, and he hadn't a catalogue. But then, though he might have liked the Parrot a little (though I rather hope he didn't. I'm not sure that I do now)—he liked me a good deal more, and——"

"You don't like the Parrot?" Rex

exclaimed, horrified.

"Not very much," Daphne said deliberately. "Not now. I rather think it's a wretched, proud, arrogant creature, like the man who painted it. And selfish. Really selfish, putting his stupid little pride before—well, before other things, and—well, though you have got the fifty pounds which we wanted so badly, I'm not sure that I want to have anything to do with them. Or with you—or with—"

"Daphne! Daphne! You can't mean that," Rex cried, and, crossing to her, he

caught her in his arms.

Whereupon Uncle George—as if to demonstrate conclusively that, after all, there is something to be said for uncles and such-like family appendages—quietly made his way out of the studio.

### YOUNG MAY.

THE air's crystal clear,
The sky scilla blue;
King-Cups by the mere—
Hark! Listen! "Cuck-oo"—
The gorse gleams with gold,
The sun's hot and bold,
But the wind is still easterly,
Tingling and cold.

There's dust in the lane,
And chicks in the yard;
Hush! "Cuckoo" again.
On fields daisy-starred
New lambs frisk and bleat,
Each blacklegged, and sweet,
And the cowslips are gilding
The grass at our feet.

JESSIE POPE.

# Car & Countryside

# Things to see when Motoring

Though so much is being done to spoil our lovely countryside, there are still innumerable objects and places of interest within easy reach of every great city. The following is the second of a series of articles designed to suggest new trains of thought and experience to motorists and others who are willing to forsake the familiar and often monotonous main and arterial roads in favour of the by-ways.

## II.—HOMESTEAD MOATS OF

- EAST ANGLIA
- By FRANK ALDOUS

HOUGH the scenery of the Eastern Counties is often spoken of as tame featureless, and motorists cyclists with intimate knowledge of the regions that lie between and away from the great highways tell quite a different story. Certainly few districts better reward the "potterer" who seeks the harvest of a quiet eve and has a weakness for the quaint To suggest only one line of and curious.

investigation, there remain through out Essex and Suffolk and Norfolk innumerable homestead moats. Many of the sites are now occupied bу farmhouses, and usually the moat has been partially filled in

to facili-

tate access to the house and buildings. Even where houses were not actually fortified it seems to have been a common practice to excavate a moat around the site, and the enclosure so made often extends to quite a large area. In addition to the house there were the barns and farm buildings and extensive gardens and cattle yards to enclose. The older the site, as a general rule, the greater the area enclosed. As

> time passed sites became smaller. until the moat surround e d only the house itself. The walls o f such houses often rise sheer from the water, as at Parham Old Hall. the ancient seat of the Willoughbys, Helmingham



[L. A. Simpson.

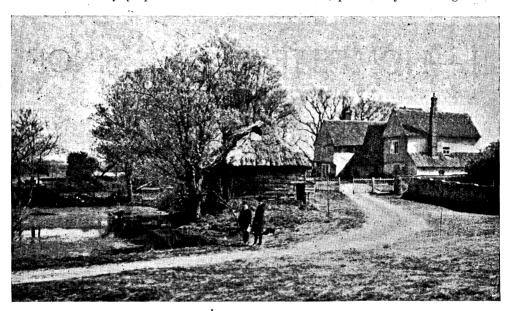
PARHAM OLD HALL WITH ITS MOAT.

Hall, Playford Hall and Bradfield Hall. These are houses of the early sixteenth century, and it would appear that the moats were made, as were those at Hampton Court, rather as a concession to ancient custom than for actual use as a means of defence.

The majority of the moats recorded by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments probably date from mediæval times. There can be no doubt that many are of Saxon origin and some of still greater antiquity.

The ditch and rampart were used as a form of defence by peoples of the Bronze

gically, the word moat is derived from the Old French form *mote*, a mound or embankment of earth used as a means of defence. The modern French word *motte* means clod. By a curious process of transition in meaning the name originally given to the mound of earth was applied to the trench from which it had been taken. A similar change-over has occurred in the case of the word dike, but in this case the change is in the opposite direction. Properly, a dike is a trench dug out of the earth, a natural or artificial channel for water. Now the word is commonly applied to a wall of earth, such as sea walls, particularly to such great sea



ST. CLAIR'S HALL, ST. OSYTH, ESSEX.

A roadway over the moat at a house dating from the fourteenth century.

Age and their predecessors of Neolithic times. Prehistoric peoples constructed many hill-fort camps in the more hilly districts of the country, and the moated enclosures probably played a corresponding rôle for the low-lying flat lands. The hill-fort survived until comparatively recent times among the Maories of New Zealand.

The idea of a ditch and rampart as a defensive earthwork was developed on a grand scale by the prehistoric people who threw up the Devil's Ditch and Fleam Dyke, which bestride the Icknield Way. The Wansdyke in the West, too, is an example of an extensive prehistoric earthwork.

Although there were moats in this country long before the Norman Conquest, etymolodefence works as those of Holland. In Scotland any wall fence or hedge used as a boundary is called a dyke.

The moated area around St. Clair's Hall, St. Osyth, was formerly divided by a cross arm, and this seems to have been a common practice in the larger moated sites. At Helmingham the area now used as kitchen gardens was probably occupied by the old Hall, before the present house was erected by Sir Lionel Tollemach in 1512. In central, or High Suffolk, a moat, or what remains of it, is the almost invariable adjunct of a typical farmhouse. The soil of the district is derived from the chalky boulder clay, and hence is almost impervious to water. It is therefore ideal soil for moat



SOUTH SIDE OF ST. CLAIR'S HALL, ST. OSYTH.



FLATFORD MILL.

The subject of Constable's famous painting in the National Gallery remains to-day much as it was in his time.



OTLEY HALL, SUFFOLK.

Carefully restored by its owner. The moat has been partly filled in.



A MOATED FARMHOUSE IN HIGH SUFFOLK.

The High House, Otley, the most of which is partly filled in.

construction. On sandy or chalky soil the moats would tend to dry up after a prolonged drought and their defensive value would be largely lost. Consequently, they are found more generally in districts with a clay subsoil.

What could be a more pleasant experience during an English summer at its best than to sit reading on a quiet Sunday afternoon on a lawn shaded by tall elms whose lower branches stretch down to the moat. A pair of swans float majestically on the still water, while ducks preen themselves on the bank farther down. From among the rushes comes from time to time the querulous highpitched note of a moorhen.

The moat is in reality a small self-contained world of many inhabitants. Sedgewarblers build their nests among the reeds, and on the banks among the undergrowth nest many small warblers. In the Spring innumerable frogs come here to spawn and keep the place awake day and night with their incessant croaking. Later, black patches of wriggling tadpoles are to be seen in the shallows. A few great crested newts, near relatives of the frogs, also find a home

here. Old moats, too, harbour coarse fish; tench and carp thrive in the stagnant waters. Anciently, perhaps, they helped to supply the houses which they surrounded with the Friday meal, as did the stew-ponds of the monastic establishments.

In the deeper waters grow many beautiful wild plants, bulrushes, reeds and yellow iris, and the delicate water violet with its symmetrical pyramidal form and delicate pink three-petalled flowers. Nearer the bank are the tall willow herbs, figworts and purple loosestrife, together with more lowly water plants. Water lilies and exotic water plants have often been introduced into the natural water garden.

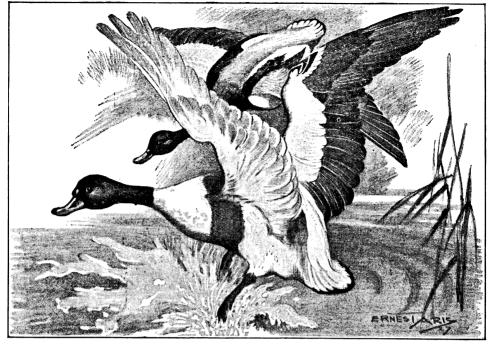
It may be argued that moats produce mosquitoes and smells. Perhaps they do, but then we cannot have it all ways. They certainly make ideal settings for English country homes.

Our photographs give a few typical examples. The wanderer who is not pressed for time will discover many others for himself and be richly rewarded in so doing by finding at every turn unexpected interest in the seemingly commonplace.



A TREE-FRINGED MOAT, EAST ANGLIA.

The next issue will contain a further article in this series describing a run through "The Thomas Hardy Country."



"He called the slim young duck, and the two flew off to a distant marsh,"

## THE WHISTLER

### By H. THOBURN-CLARKE

ILLUSTRATED BY ERNEST ARIS

⊚

T was early May. Beyond the blue hills the sun rose in a glory of rose and gold, and across the wide stretch of the estuary the wet sands glowed as if bathed in liquid fire, while the winding river, twisting snakelike, as it flowed down towards the distant sea, seemed made of molten metal. Its burnished surface reflected, as in a mirror, all the surroundings of mountain and sky; here flecked with delicate purple; there a marvellous tint of rose; again blue, across which tinted mist drifted lazily.

The high spring tides had left shallow pools of rosy-tinted water upon the nearer sands, and around the edge of one, a flock of sheldrakes had gathered in all the snowy whiteness, brilliant black and vivid chestnut that formed the glory of their nuptial plumage. The slanting sun's rays just peeping over the hill-tops showed up the brilliancy of their glossy green heads and necks, and the

faint wisps of mist that the sun chased across the sand, magnified the sheldrakes until they looked almost as large as geese. The shelducks quacked boisterously, and raced backwards and forwards through the shallow water, splashing it up in great sprays, until the showers of drops caught their tinting from the rising sun, and sparkled like a glittering mass of diamond rain. The drakes were more sedate, and strutted about with chests puffed out, their vivid chestnut-tinted gorgets glowing ruddily in the sunrise.

Suddenly the whole flock was all attention. The ducks craned their heads forward, while the drakes stalked majestically towards the silver river. From far up the winding stream came a flute-like whistle . . . the mating whistle of a bachelor sheldrake . . . surprisingly sweet and clear. The whistler was swimming rapidly down towards them, the water rippling as he forced his way

through it. He swam until he came to the edge of the river nearest to the waiting flock. The drakes puffed out their chests still more and solemnly strutted down to meet the intruder, who, forsaking the river, walked hurriedly forwards.

The drakes assumed an air of indignant surprise at any sheldrake daring to attempt to join the charmed circle of their flock. The ducks chattered with bobbing heads and ranged themselves behind their lords. was only one unmated duck among their number, but an elderly widower had hoped to claim her as his own. Already he had wooed her with ardent affection. But she was very slim and very young and his attentions had not waked any response on her part. All the world over youth calls to youth in affairs of the heart, and the stranger's soft whistle found an echo in the feelings of the slim young duck. She chattered gaily, bobbed her head eagerly, and ran rapidly forward to meet the Whistler: coquettishly still bobbing and dipping her head she stood in front of him.

This was too much for the elderly widower. With an indignant cry he darted forward, struck the slim young duck a blow with his outstretched wing, and savagely pulled a beakful of glossy green feathers from her neck. Then, like a feathered tornado, he launched himself between the slim young duck and her admirer. The slim young duck bobbed and dipped her head as she slipped swiftly around the elderly widower, and glanced coyly at the Whistler. Then drew aside to watch the inevitable conflict between the two drakes.

There is nothing very alarming in the combat between a couple of sheldrakes. human eves it is simply a grotesque happening, a subject for amused laughter; but in the eyes of the sheldrake community it is a very serious and prolonged affair. The rest of the drakes formed up in a row as if they were judges, while the loquacious ducks chattered and bobbed their heads as they walked Then they raced off to around their mates. the pool and splashed and amused themselves. Only the slim young duck now watched the combat. For a few seconds the drakes jostled each other, pushing and shoving, then they separated and ran in opposite directions for perhaps six feet. Then both paused. Once more they andadvanced, holding themselves very erect, their chests well out until they reached each other and the pushing and shoving began again. The comic battle was continued for a long time, the tactics being repeated again and again. The fight might have continued for the whole day if the tide had not come swirling up the river, and a ripple of foamedged water rushed across the field of battle. and the combatants had to hurry away to avoid the swirling tide. At least the elderly widower flew off, but the Whistler stood up, opened his wings widely, dipped and dived. then uttering a joyous whistle he called the slim young duck, and the two flew off to a distant marsh, there to sleep until the tide went out and they could feed on the flats in The peewits came flying in in long sinuous lines from the shores of the bay close to the sea, and settled down with their heads facing the inflowing tide. Flight after flight of oyster-catchers, calling plaintively, followed the peewits, while a company of wild duck in a swamp near by quacked and squabbled over their domestic affairs, never troubling if the whole world knew of their little family jars and disagreements.

Then the tide ebbed, and the Whistler and the slim young duck slipped into the silver river, and, preening themselves, floated down until they reached a favourite feedingground, and here they spent the day until the sun set and the night settled down on the estuary. Eight great herons, drifting on wide wings from the heronry, took up their stations at the edge of the stream, peering into the water in search of passing fish and levying a toll upon the twisting, squirming sand-eels. A dog-otter came paddling by. Well he knew where the salmon lingered in a certain pool. No one but the herons saw him paddling softly by with those active hind legs of his, but they croaked harshly as he chased a salmon from end to end of the pool and finally captured and ate it. He had slipped back up the river to his holt long before anyone awoke, leaving no trace of his Only a few blood-stains upon a rock and a sprinkling of silver scales . . . and the herons got the blame for that!

So the days passed placidly until the nesting month arrived. The dwellers on the marsh grew restless and quarrelsome. And all combined to be very peevish when a pair of black-headed gulls came and settled in their midst. It was strange how eggs would vanish if left alone for a minute, and the whole of the inhabitants of the marsh united in blaming the black-headed gulls for the tragedy of lost eggs. The slim young duck grew very restless. Her heart longed for a home on the fell-side towering high to the north of the estuary, where her babyhood

had been spent, while the Whistler, remembering his own baby days among the rabbit burrows on the great barrow on the opposite shore, wanted to go nest-hunting in that direction.

But the slim young duck bobbed and bobbed, chattered and explained, and would have none of his wishes, and one day she flew up from the edge of the marsh, mounting higher and higher, until she reached the fell, with its ridges of bare, bleak limestone, and long lengths of crumbly screes. The Whistler followed. No thought of deserting his wilful little mate ever entered his head. He was quite certain that his presence was necessary in the selecting of a nest. He was quite annoyed because she would not glance into any of the rabbit burrows that he thought absolutely the most perfect nesting places in the whole world.

She flew from one limestone ridge to another, peering down into the deep, waterworn crevices, craning her neck forward, while her bright eyes surveyed the place. Suddenly she gave an ecstatic quack. She had found what she wanted. She literally flopped down the water-worn side of the limestone, until she reached a ferny patch at the bottom, and ran across this to reach a hollow on the opposite side. Here a rabbit had burrowed into the layer of soft earth under the rocks. It did not matter in the least that the occupant was at home. She had made up her mind, and with a sudden swift movement she charged down upon the owner, and literally pulling out beakfuls of fur, she sent the indignant rabbit rushing helter-skelter down the rocky sides of the Fortunately the mother rabbit was not at home. She was too much occupied with looking after a nestful of babies concealed in a secret burrow among the rocks. Otherwise the slim young duck might have had a different reception.

As it was, the slim young duck appropriated the nesting material the rabbit had collected in the burrow, and arranging it to her liking, she settled down comfortably. When the Whistler, alarmed at her long absence, scrambled down the limestone ridge and peeped in, she was busy stripping her breast of soft fluffy down and strewing it carefully among the grass and moss that formed the nest. Then he scrambled back to the top of the ridge and looked over the It seemed to him that every shelduck that he knew was nest-hunting among the rocks of the fell. Looking down upon the marshes far below, he could see tiny white dots moving about over the short grass. These he knew were the drakes that had not bothered to come nest-hunting with their mates. Suddenly he launched himself into the air and flew down and joined them. Half an hour later an indignant series of quacks, coming as it were from mid-air, reminded him that his mate was much annoved  $\mathbf{at}$ his departure. Whistling sweetly, he flew up and met her, and together the two planed down until they reached the marsh, and settled down for a sleep until the outgoing tide uncovered their feeding ground.

The days passed quietly enough; the only happening that threatened to upset the happiness of the slim young duck was the annoying behaviour of the rabbit that owned the burrow. The next day when the duck returned to the nest she found him curled up in her nest and her beautiful creamywhite egg lying out under the ferns. With hissing beak, she went for the rabbit, and in spite of his bites and scratches, she tweeted so much fur out of him that he once more rushed off in a wild panic down the fell-Then the slim young duck went to retrieve her egg, to find it ominously light, with a neat hole bored in one side. marauding crow had found the ejected egg and made a meal of it. She eyed the empty shell with savage eyes and with fluffed-out feathers. Then she carefully enlarged the hole, and slipping one mandible into the hole, she grasped the empty shell firmly, and walked sedately out of the hollow. Spreading her wings, she flew down on to the scree far below, laid the eggshell upon a little grassy bank and then returned to her nest. She was determined that she would not relinquish the nest, but the burrow was too short. With loud quacks she called her mate from the marsh below, and when the Whistler came obedient to her call, the two spent the rest of the day excavating a deep burrow that curved around almost in a circle, and in the furthest point of this burrow she reconstructed her nest and laid her second egg. Strange to say, before many days were over she had made peace with the owner of the burrow and the two dwelt quietly each in its own compartment without interfering with the other. A sort of armed neutrality that had its advantages, for the marauding crow apparently considered that no shelduck had concealed a treasured nest of creamy-white eggs behind the rabbit's nest, and so left it alone.

The time drifted on, the Whistler taking

his turn at sitting on the eggs, and except during the hurried moments of feeding, he hardly left the vicinity of the nest. Then one day the slim young duck appeared carrying in her beak the severed halves of shells, and the Whistler, creeping cautiously through the curved burrow saw a number of tiny smoky-tinted ducklings clustered in the

nest and gazed at them in wonder, for indeed it was difficult to tell which were ducklings and what was iust soft downy fluff. There was surprising likeness between the two, and the Whistler gazed long and anxiously at the tiny clustering creatures. Then the  $_{
m slim}$ young duck came back and covered them with her soft wings and the two settled down for the night.

The first pale tints of dawning had begun to colour the eastern horizon, when

the Whistler

woke up and, venturing forth with head and neck stretched out, gazed anxiously around the mist-laden atmosphere. The whole world slept except the night-folk that were hurrying home to bed. The sheldrake crouched flatly behind the jutting bit of limestone and watched a big dog-fox lope past carrying a red-brown hen back to his young ones sheltered in a burrow somewhere upon the fell. A wood-owl drifted moth-

like over the head, and when these had passed, he thought that the way was clear; but his mate was not trusting anything to chance, and she came out peering anxiously into the mist that covered the country beneath them with a white carpet. Somewhere a dog barked angrily, cocks crowed loudly from the hen-yards in the village amid

the rocks that shut in the little valley.

It seemed as if the air was full of crooning sounds, and as the mist lifted and the sun reddened the sky, one could see other sheldrakes eagerly watching out for danger. Then the two sheldrakes returned to the burrow and a few minutes later they emerged with ten tiny, smokytinted creatures following anxiously behind. They were quite unafraid, although the first glimpse of light must have been ling to eyes that had only



eastern hori- "She sent the indignant rabbit rushing helter-skelter down the rather startzon, when rocky sides of the fell." ling to eyes

been used to the gloomy twilight of the nest. The burrow was quite a dark place.

Then began the descent of the fell. It was wonderful how the tiny morsels contrived to follow their mother as she walked over the limestone ridges, through bramble bushes and across long slopes of stone-littered ground. But they did, one after the other, the Whistler bringing up the rear. The march was slow, as befitted such tiny

feet, but the little procession was marching through the village long before the occupants

of the cottages were stirring.

A poacher returning from his night's work came hurrying down the road, and the mother shelduck darted across his path, the tiny ones scattering like thistle-down in a breeze, hiding under tufts of grass and fragments of broken leaves, while the parent sheldrakes flopped about and behaved as if they were sorely wounded in a frantic endeavour to lead the man away from the hidden ducklings. The poacher stood and watched them for a few minutes, then resumed his way. Fortunately no one in that district considered sheldrakes good to eat, and so he left them alone. soon as he had vanished over a stone wall, the little band, once more united, continued their march.

Almost at once they came upon a party of cows sleeping just outside the farmyard gate. The way was completely blocked from wall to wall, and the sleepy cows paid no heed to the hissing and quacks of the slim young duck.

She was almost desperate. The sun had risen and already the village was awaking. Even her angry pecks received no response. The sea was still some distance away, and the journey must be completed before the villagers thronged the narrow lane.

With a courage born of despair the slim young duck ran hurriedly towards the nearest cow and scrambled up on to her back. If they would not move then they must climb over the animals. She called to her ducklings, but they hesitated. Fortunately they did, for the cow, with a sudden snort, sprang up, and rushed away down the lane, and the daring shelduck that had climbed upon her shoulder was shot wildly and unexpectedly into the air. Only her wings prevented her from having a very nasty fall.

The cows stampeded in a hurry after their companion, and the little company clustered around their mother, who dipped and bobbed her head, explaining just how she had routed the herd. But they were not to reach the sea that morning.

A party of children running down to the beach to bathe overtook the little company. The boys ran after the fluttering sheldrakes in a vain endeavour to capture them, as

they tried to lead them away from where the little ducklings clustered at the side of a rut. But the little girls had seen the little ones hide and soon caught them up and placed them in one of their hats, while the parent ducks flew wildly overhead, uttering the most plaintive cries, and even beat at the robbers with their wings. But in vain. The children, delighted with their capture, carried the ducklings home and placed them in a small yard surrounded by rather high walls.

The girls were quite cross because the frightened little ducklings would not eat, or even paddle in the shallow dish of water they had placed for them. They could only run around the yard and call sadly and shrilly for their mother. She, in an agony of grief, flew in circles overhead, and, even when the children were tired of their new playthings, flew down into the yard, and hastily examined every corner of the wall to see if possibly she might find a way out, but there was none. Most of the yard was paved and the ground close under the wall was beaten hard. There was no hope of finding a way out in that direction. Her mate came down to help her, but even he had to own that nothing could be

The day passed, and the sunset, but still the devoted pair remained with their nestlings. All that night she brooded over them, but in the earliest dawn she decided upon a plan to convey her young ones out of their prison.

Dipping and bobbing to the Whistler, she evidently explained, for a few minutes later she picked up one of the little ones and flew off with it. Once on the roadway she dropped it and flew back for another, and thus the two parent sheldrakes carried all ten ducklings out from the yard. Once all were free they resumed their march to the sea, very weary, but triumphantly excited that they had managed to escape in safety.

They did not pause until the long dusty road had been traversed, and then with a quack of relief the slim young duck dropped down upon a dry bank of sand near the river and went to sleep, while the ducklings swam and dived as if they had been weeks on the river instead of being only four days old. But they were all happy and contented, for had they not escaped from captivity?

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE AUDIENCE

### By CEDRIC HARDWICKE

THE BRILLIANT IMPERSONATOR OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL RICHARD

• VARWELL IN "YELLOW SANDS"

•

Photographs by Sasha.

FORTUNE awaits the theatrical manager or actor who can really understand and exploit the psychology of the audience.

The behaviour

and mental attitude of any given gathering of men and women has always been a problem that, so far as I know, has never been satisfactorily explained. Why is it that one night an audience will be intensely intrigued or amused, as the case may be, by certain portions of the play, while on the next night the same effect or point will go for nothing?

Again, why is one audience quiet, undemonstrative, and seemingly imperceptive whilst another audience is gay, noisily appreciative, and sensitive to every point

the play has to offer? The audiences will probably be the same numerically, drawn from the same classes and containing the same average of intelligence, yet there is this marked difference in responsiveness. Why?

It is most improbable that on one particular evening all the cheerful people in the

town will assemble, and on another all the dyspeptics. No! The attitude of an audience towards a play must be the consensus of opinion of individuals of every sort and

type.

And once an average audience is assembled — usually about the middle of the first Act—and the play has begun to take effect, a very definite bias is set up.

For this reason an actor who makes a tardy entrance in a play invariably asks those who have already been on, "What are they like?" And he is told that they are either dull or good.

Many material factors may contribute towards the behaviour of an audience—the weather, for instance, the political situation, trade outlook, and, last but not

MR, CEDRIC HARDWICKE.

least, the time of the performance.

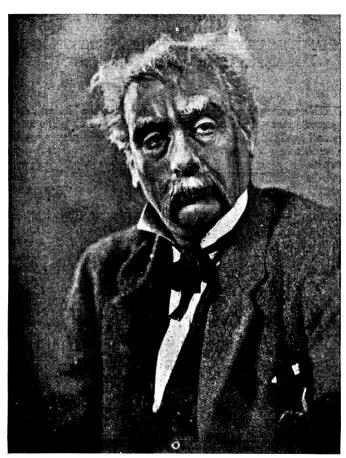
In the evening, when work is finished, an audience is invariably more appreciative than at a matinée, and I doubt whether the most amusing play on record would raise a laugh if performed before breakfast. Similarly, a Saturday night audience, with the prospect of a day's rest on the morrow and

a week of work behind it, is more likely to abandon itself to the enjoyment of a play than a Monday audience with a week of toil before it.

I believe, too, that the location of a theatre subconsciously influences an audience. For instance, Piccadilly Circus suggests lights and laughter, and a tragedy or a drab play would, probably, stand little chance of success at the Criterion or the London

audience that we must go for the real solution.

There has always been a theory that intellect is not confined to the individual, but surrounds the body with an aura of some kind. We have all experienced the sensation of being in the presence of someone who we feel is either hostile or friendly to us, quite apart from what is said or done. Everyone contributes something to the



MR. CEDRIC HARDWICKE AS RICHARD VARWELL IN "YELLOW SANDS."

Pavilion. However, it is impossible to make this an invariable guide, because, theatrically, the unexpected usually happens, and plays sometimes succeed in theatres which have an unenviable list of failures behind them. But it is only reasonable to suppose that the more suitable a play is to a theatre and to its surroundings, the more likely is it to find an audience attuned to appreciation.

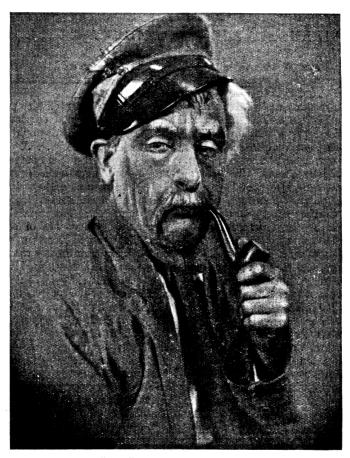
These, however, are only material considerations; it is to the mind of our

surrounding atmosphere, and so in the theatre a spirit of gaiety or boredom unconsciously spreads from one person to another. I believe it is possible for a single member of an audience to influence the rest. Just as a single sceptic at a séance will ruin the required "atmosphere," so may an audience be swayed by the dominant mind of one individual.

It is susceptibility to the prevailing atmosphere which makes the successful actor, and it is his ability to read the mind of his audience, and to adjust his acting accordingly, that brings him to the front.

I do not suggest that Success—with a capital—is the standard by which to judge art. On the contrary, the greater the artist the fewer the people attuned to his mentality and able fully to appreciate his genius. Such an artist would naturally be above "playing to the gallery"; would never

vibration, always to adapt his performance to the receptivity of his audience. I say "natural gift" advisedly, for I believe it to be a kind of automatic and subconscious intuition. In the case of the merely successful actor this adaptability is attained only by ceaseless hard work, the study of psychology, and the mastering of technique. The great actor is born, the successful actor is made. The one reaches the heights



ANOTHER STUDY OF "DICK" IN EDEN AND ADELAIDE PHILIPOTTS' SUCCESSFUL PLAY WHICH RECENTLY TERMINATED ITS LONG RUN AT THE HAVMARKET THEATRE.

lower his standard in exchange for applause. But the interpretation of a character, like that of a piece of music, is a flexible thing, capable of variation according to the ability or mood of the artist. And because it varies from time to time it does not necessarily cease to be a work of art. In fact, I contend that it is the natural gift of the great actor, supersensitive to every emotional

without taking infinite pains; the other attains success only by infinite pains.

Some playgoers may think that the one factor which explains the varying moods of an audience more satisfactorily than any of the foregoing considerations is that the actor may become stereotyped; but, of course, this would not occur to him, for is he not always perfect!

# THE SLIPPERY • LADDER •

## By ALEC WAUGH

### ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

"BUT you're staying to dinner, surely?"
"I'm sorry, Mrs. Kearton."
"Oh, and I'd been counting on
your staying. Are you sure you can't?"

The large, kindly face of Mr. Grubbson's hostess was shadowed by a genuine distress, and as Grubbson looked down at her, he wished more than ever that he could remain. She was such a jolly person, this benign, middle-aged American widow who had come over to London a few weeks ago, with a number of introductory letters, to take this large house in Sloane Street, where she had proceeded to entertain the acquaintances of her acquaintances with a prodigality of which in a post-war world the sum of competition was regrettably minute.

"I wish I could stay," he murmured. And indeed he wished most devoutly that he could. For not only was Mrs. Kearton an extremely agreeable woman, but she had what so few rich people seemingly possess, a genius for making herself comfortable. You knew as you walked into her drawing-room that it would be only with the greatest reluctance that you would ever leave it. In the days when life at Versailles was at its gallantest and gayest, it was customary to offer a guest a seat with the phrase, "la chaise a envie de vous embrasser." And it was a somewhat similar impression you were given as you walked across the thick pile carpeted floor in that softly scented, softly lighted atmosphere towards her amply cushioned chairs and chesterfields. Nor was it only that her house was as pleasant as herself. She had one of those cooks that make people talk about the Splendide as though it were a city chophouse. No one who had tasted her Caneton à la Presse would speak again of the Tour d'Argent, and even the Moulin d'Or could scarcely fail to be unenvious of her Crèpes Suzette, while as for Bini . . .

"It does seem madness," sighed Grubbson to himself, "to let so much excellence pass by one."

"And I've got such nice people coming," Mrs. Kearton was continuing. "People whom I'm sure you would like to meet.

There's Janet Okley . . ."

At the sound of the name Grubbson gave an inward shudder. Janet Okley, that appalling woman, with her high, squeaking voice, and her interminable recitations of her own and her imitators' poems. Janet Okley . . . That was of course the snag about it. Mrs. Kearton was the most delightful woman in the world, she had the most charming house in London, and the best cook this side of the Atlantic, but she did know the most appalling people.

With failing courage he listened to the list of the accepting guests. Name after discredited name, they were trotted out cheerfully, by this generous-hearted creature who had come to London knowing no one, with her letters of introduction, to find herself the appointed prey of every charlatan between Hammersmith Broadway and the

Temple.

"And if you're at all shy about not being changed," she finished, "I'm sure there'll be several of them not in evening

dress "

There would be. He could picture them arriving in plus-fours and Oxford trousers, as though they were staying in an hotel. With a sad smile he held out his hand. "I'm sorry," he said, "I'd give anything to be able to stay. But I'm afraid that I can't possibly put off these people."

She pouted disconsolately.

"You'll be coming round to see me soon, though?"

"I'll ring up first thing on Wednesday."
"Well, that'll be fine; and don't forget
my party on the twelfth."

"I've got the date marked in my calendar in red ink."

"But I'm much afraid," he added, to himself, as he walked out into the chill of Sloane Street, "that there'll be something written in black above it."

For a party was really more than he could stand. There were certain people that anyone in his position simply could not afford to know, and to have to meet the whole crowd of them at once! How awful it would be to be hailed by someone like Janet Okley when you are at a place like the Embassy, with quite good people, the Threadbares for example! He could picture the scene: Janet, in some appalling scarlet apology for a frock, on the arm of some fearful-looking dago in a doublebreasted dinner jacket, shouting across the room, "Hullo, Grubbie! Going to Blanche's show on Monday?" He could picture Lady Threadbare's monocle going up, and he could hear Lord Threadbare murmur, "Ah, really!" as he himself stammered out some such explanatory excuse as, "Curious woman, rather brilliant, writes poetry, Janet Okley, expect you know her stuff." It would be terrible, terrible. For as painstakingly assiduous a social climber as Grubbson appreciated to the full the ignominious embarrassment of acquaintances that had to be explained.

And sooner or later something like that was bound to happen if one went on mixing in that sort of a crowd. People like Janet Okley had no social sense. They might do anything. They might even come over and sit down at one's table. It was the sort of thing one just couldn't afford. And yet, and yet . . . It was such a nice house, such a nice cook, such a pleasant hostess; if only one had been there when she arrived, if only one had had the choosing of her friends. If only now it were possible to manipulate her parties for her; if only before she were too fatally involved, it could be arranged to extricate her from this appalling set. . . .

Something definite, Grubbson decided, had to be done about it. One could not, on account of people like Janet Okley, allow oneself to be deprived of so much geniune entertainment. His brain was seething with ideas as he turned eastwards in the direction of the Granville Club.

From his solitary seat in one of the window tables in the dining-room of the Granville Club, the Honourable Woolgar Shepphard some five minutes later observed Grubbson hesitate in the doorway. "I suppose," was his thought, "that he'll come over and sit next me."

It was a supposition that he made with a complete absence either of pleasure or displeasure. He neither liked nor disliked Grubbson. He accepted him as a presentable fellow-member of nondescript talents, nondescript appearance, nondescript stand-They would meet now and again at theatres and restaurants and they would exchange a word or two, and every two or three months they would cut into the same bridge four in the card-room. Every eight or nine months they would find themselves invited to the same dinner-party. He had accepted him and ignored him. He was just as happy to have Grubbson at his table as not to have him.

He gave every appearance, however, of cordial welcome.

"What, coming to join me?" he said, when it had become quite obvious that Grubbson was. "That is jolly. Long time since we've met. Let me warn you against the soup—it's tasteless."

"The food in this club gets worse each

day."

"I've said that of every club I've ever been a member of."

"But it's true of this. And when I think," sighed Grubbson, "of the dinner I've been driven to refuse!"

"The man who refuses a good dinner

"There are times when one has to sacrifice even one's gourmandise. It is a sad story!" And he shook his head ruefully over the wine list of the Granville Club.

"A pint of St. Emilion," he ordered. "Emilion, when one might be drinking Margaux '87!" And he paused as the practised story-teller pauses when he is on the brink of his most telling movement. . . . For this, when the general mediocrity of his talents has been admitted, could not justly be denied to Grubbson. He did know how to tell a story. And as he recounted the story of Mrs. Kearton, he succeeded in doing that which in the case of Woolgar Shepphard he had never done before: he definitely inspired interest.

"Can't you picture her," he concluded, "marrying as a young girl before she'd had the time to see anything of city life, going out with her husband to a ranch in Colorado, spending her thirty most vivid years in that lonely but open-hearted world, imbucd to

the bones with the American spirit of hospitality, making her home one of the jolliest and best run in the state, and then, when her husband dies leaving her a rich but a childless widow, can't you picture her first idea to come over and see what the 'old world's' like? And she collects a number of letters of introduction, the majority of them at second and third hand, and she sets up this big house, and she entertains whoever there may be that chooses to roll along in exactly the same spirit that she entertained on her ranch. If a person out there in those back places comes to your house, you give him the best you've got and he stays as long as he likes. That's how the Americans understand hospitality, and she's playing the same game over again, and of course she's being sponged on by as impossible a crowd of blighters as you ever struck. a romantic situation, don't you think?"

Indeed it was. And Woolgar Shepphard, who was a dilettante in fresh sensations, found his curiosity appreciably whettened.

"That's something really new," he said, "and she's a thoroughly good sort, you say?"

"First class."

"And the people she's got round her are quite appalling?"

"The last word."

"Heavens, but I'd like to see her."

It was the proposal that right through the conversation Grubbson had been angling for. But he had been resolved that the suggestion should come from Shepphard and not from him. And a soft glow of triumph warmed his heart as he replied:

"My dear fellow, there'ld be nothing easier. She's giving a party on the twelfth. Why don't you come along with me?"

And as Woolgar Shepphard took out his diary to note the date, the glow in Grubbson's heart deepened into a furnace of excited triumph.

The first card in his game had won a trick.

If the measure of a party's success is to be gauged by the volume of sound that it produces, Mrs. Kearton's soirée must be judged the most considerable event of the London season. There is no adjective but the clichéd deafening that can fittingly describe the tornado of noise that had welcomed the recitation of Janet Okley's latest elegy, "The Last Tube to Morden." The delivery of it had been admirably stage-managed. "On no account," she had

maintained, "must the material personality of the poet be permitted to interfere with the etiolated impression of the poem." So she had retired into a far corner of the room behind a black and gold screen and delivered her poem in a high, fluting voice through a low-toned megaphone. The manner was as cacophonous as the matter, and as Janet emerged at the conclusion in a sleeveless and scarlet jumper, the cheers could have been heard in Pont Street.

"Isn't she clever?" murmured Mrs. Kearton on much the same note of uncritical approval that she had applauded under the bright sunlight of day the unsaddled horse feats of her husband's ranch hands. "That was absolutely bully, my dear, and after that, why, I guess you'll want something a bit more livening than lemonade."

With the faint flush of merited success upon her cheeks, Janet Okley let herself be led towards the buffet, through the thronged masses of her audience.

It was an odd audience; the oddest conglomeration of people that Woolgar Shepphard could recall ever to have seen assembled. There had been times during the war when, sitting back in the officer's mess, he had speculated on the extraordinary effect that would be produced if by a magic wand all these men who had been drawn from such different circumstances to the seeming uniformity of khaki could be restored in a second to the conditions of civilian life from which they had come. "But even that," he said, "could not have been odder than this." Never had he seen such strangely attired shapes. There were men who looked like women and women who looked like men, and several who looked like neither. There were women with stocks and women with eyeglasses. There were men in plus-fours, men with velvet-collared dinner-jackets, men with black edging to their white ties. And they were all shouting at the tops of their voices as only Bohemians can. as far as Bohemia is anything, this was Bohemia. There were all the necessary ingredients. There were those who pretended to have talent, there were those who had had talent and had lost it, there were those who had talent and were losing it; there were those who had talent and were emerging; and about them was the ebb and flow of changing admirers and enviers. As a constant atmosphere it would have been nerve-shattering, but a solitary excursion into it was, as Woolgar Shepphard was discovering, a vivid enough experience. And it was with a genuine thrill that he the confession sound offhand, as though it observed Janet Okley advancing in his was only by her poetry that he was startled. direction.



"And sitting beside him she leant forward in the confidingly familiar manner of a fellowconspirator. 'I expect that my poem startled you a bit.'

of a fellow-conspirator. "I expect that my poem startled you a bit."

A bit," he admitted, and tried to make

For he was in point of fact alarmingly conscious of the proximity of this extremely surprising woman; her eyes, with the deep pencilled eyebrows, seemed blacker and wider than any eyes that he had ever seen; in contrast with them the whiteness of her arms was of a perplexing richness. And it was difficult to prevent oneself from watching the ceaseless flutter about the bulb of the champagne glass of those pink-tipped fingers. Altogether the sort of woman one did not come across too often.

"Yes, I expect it startled you a bit," she concluded; "does most people the first time. One has to do something, though, at parties, or one wouldn't be asked to them, —if one can't entertain back, that's to say. And I like going to parties. About the one thing I do like. You can ask me to your parties if you have any. Do you, by the way?"

"Now and again."

"That's settled, then. Splendid. Blanche," she cried, and waved an ecstatic arm towards her hostess, "this nice young man's going to give a party and ask me to it."

Benignly Mrs. Kearton beamed on them. "Bully!" she said, "there'ld be a kick to that."

"And what did I tell you?" said Grubbson as he and Shepphard walked northwards from Sloane Street towards Piccadilly.

"She's a darling!" murmured Shepphard

vaguely.

" A darling—who ? "

If it had been less dark Grubbson might have noticed, but would scarcely have understood, the flush that coloured Shepphard's cheeks as he replied hastily: "Why, Mrs. Kearton, of course. Who else?"

"The others, though." "What of them?

"Well, didn't I tell you they were pretty

"They seemed all right."

"My dear fellow . . ."

"They were all pretty genial, anyhow."

"I dare say, but they are not the sort of people that you'ld care . . ."-just in time Grubbson caught himself up. He had been about to say, "care to be seen about with," but that, he was perspicacious enough to realise, was his standard, not Shepphard's. Shepphard had only one standard, whether people were or were not amusing. standard he could afford, Grubbson enviously conceded. When you were a peer's son it didn't matter whom you were seen about with.

"The sort of people," was Grubbson's

emendation, "that you'ld care to see a lot

"Oh, well, as for that, perhaps not," Shepphard admitted grudgingly. For in point of fact the bulk of the party had scarcely existed as individuals for him. It had been the background against which he had let himself be enchanted by the open friendliness of Mrs. Kearton and the startling vivacity of Janet Okley. "Perhaps not," he repeated.

"Didn't İ hear you say something about having a party?"

"Yes," came the reply vaguely. "You must come to it."

"Because," Grubbson persisted, "that's so exactly what I think should be done. If we can only get Mrs. Kearton introduced into a really pleasant crowd, she'll soon forget about all those others."

"Yes, but . . . well, I mean, I'd hardly

looked at it in quite that way.

"It's a good way, though."

"Oh . . . yes."

"It would be a shame if such a really first-rate person were to be flung away on such a thoroughly fourth-rate crowd."

"Um . . . yes."

"So if you were to arrange a party for her of really jolly people, who would be bound to like her and start asking her out . . ."

"Um . . . yes."

There was little enough enthusiasm in Shepphard's mumbled answers, so little indeed that Grubbson perceived that unless the matter were clinched definitely now when Shepphard was as liable to influence as he would ever be, the opportunity would pass for ever, and with it would pass the best chance he had ever had of establishing himself firmly in that world in which he had felt himself to be regrettably on the fringe. To establish Mrs. Kearton and himself as her impresario, along with her . . . was not the man to let such an opportunity pass by.

"It's as good an idea," he maintained, "as I've ever had. Why don't we go into

the club now, and fix it up?"

He spoke in that determined tone which one has to be extremely resolute to resist, and Woolgar Shepphard was in no mood for resolution. He was in a languorously blissful state of mind. He had had a happy evening. He had met one extremely pleasant and one extremely exciting person. And he wanted to think about them.

So he allowed himself to be led into the smoking-room of the Granville Club, allowed

himself to have a whisky and soda ordered him, allowed Grubbson to take a sheet of notepaper and a pencil, and with a preliminary "I think it should be a largish party," prepare the composition of his guests.

'John Wakeril . . . Lady Mayne . . . Eric Colborn . . ." One by one Grubbson enunciated the names, and after each name Shepphard nodded his head sleepily. was paying scarcely any attention. was remembering happily Mrs. Kearton's wide-eyed smile, and less happily but more vividly the long pink-tipped fingers that had fluttered round the bowl of a champagne glass. He was in a mood when man is an easy prey. Grubbson at that moment had the ball lying at his foot.

But, and this is a platitude that cannot too often be repeated, there is no heavier vintage than success. It is not only alcohol that intoxicates, that blunts our senses, deadens our perceptions, that projects us over the brink of wisdom into incredible indiscretions. Or, rather, there are other things that have on us the same effect as alcohol. And as Grubbson proceeded through that list of guests, the sound of each distinguished name that never before had he been able to handle so familiarly, mounted as the fumes of wine will, drop by drop, into his brain; so that his cheeks began to flush, his eyes to sparkle, and his hands to quiver, so that the reasoning voice of caution was set at peace, so that he forgot it was Shepphard's party, and they were Shepphard's guests.

"What about Lady Jane Naylor? Is she the sort of person that we want?"

It was an understandable mistake; that dropping of the "you" for "we." And the tone of aggressive patrician superiority in which he spoke is also understandable when you remember how often in his dreams he had pictured himself to be in the position of giving parties of which he would be able to say, "Lady Jane Naylor, is she the sort of person that we want?" It was an understandable mistake, but it was none the less unfortunate. For Lady Jane happened to be one of Shepphard's most personal friends, and the sound of her name used in that tone, and in that context, stirred Shepphard out of his romantic lethargy. Who was this fellow to be talking of "we" and of Lady Jane as though he knew her, or rather as though he more than knew her, knew things about her?

"Lady Jane?" he cried. "Why, of course, yes. She comes to all my parties. Let's

see now who you've got down upon that list . . ." And snatching up the paper, he ran his eye quickly down the row of names. .

"Yes . . . yes . . . yes . . ." he muttered to himself. "That'll do, that's all right . . . yes . . . . But look here," he suddenly added at the end, "you haven't got down that woman who recited her poem."
"What, Janet Okley?"

" Yes."

"But you don't really mean to say . . ."

"Of course I do: she's terrible fun. don't know if she'll come, mark you. She might find it rather tame. But she must be asked."

"Tame!" Incredulously Grubbson echoed the adjective. That Janet Okley should have the impertinence to find a party of Woolgar Shepphard's "tame"! And once again the excitement of the moment suppressed that caution without which the most assiduous of climbers must lose their foot-

"Janet Okley, my dear fellow, if you only knew . . . ! "

It was more than Shepphard was prepared to stand. To have his new friends maligned, and insinuations made against his old . . . no, really, it would not do. . . .

"My good Grubbson," he said chillily, "is this my party or is it yours?"

It was, that party of Woolgar Shepphard's. extraordinarily like most other parties. The guests were invited for ten o'clock, but nobody turned up before eleven, except a couple that had been included by mistake, and arrived at half-past nine. There was champagne, and there were cocktails and olives and foie-gras sandwiches. For the first thirty minutes everyone talked of the theatre they had just come from, and during the last thirty minutes of the night club they were on their way to. And as there should at all good parties be a stunt of some sort, the middle hour was occupied by Janet Okley, her recitation and the consequent buzz of comment and conjecture. It was, in fact, a very ordinary party, of which two things only need be set on record: the first, that Blanche Kearton was an immense success. She was not only extremely pleasant, but she was also something extremely new. In a world where it had become the fashion to assume indifference, she was displaying a wholehearted joie de vivre. There was an irresistibly contagious quality about her enthusiasm. People immediately be-



came happier after talking with her. And long before the evening was over, more than a dozen calling cards with telephone numbers scrawled across them had been exchanged, and an infinite number of promises to "arrange things" made. Blanche Kearton, the least clamberous person in the world, was, in fact, on a fair way to self-establishment. That was the first thing to be set on record.

The second was a little incident that occurred half-way through the evening as the buzz of excitement that had followed Janet Okley's recitation was beginning to

subside. In a corner of the room Shepphard and Lady Jane Naylor were discussing the performance.

"Now that I do call," Lady Jane was strenuously maintaining, "a really too marvellous thing in Neo-Georgian."

She was maintaining it without any likelihood of contradiction from her host, when Grubbson came up and touched Shepphard on the shoulder.

"May I have half a word?" he asked, Not too willingly Shepphard excused himself and turned aside. "Well?" he asked.

At any other moment Grubbson, who was anything but a fool, would have had the perspicacity to realise that the tone in which that "Well?" was uttered, revealed

remember what I told you, didn't I? We only had to introduce her to the right



a state of mind that it was wise to handle warily; but the success of his plan was more than his caution was able to resist.

"I say, isn't it going splendidly?" he whispered excitedly.

"Î am glad," Šhepphard replied stiffly, that you are enjoying yourself."

"I knew it was a splendid plan. You

people." And in his eye was a conspirational gleam that Shepphard found infinitely distasteful.

"You said," was his comment, "that you had something to say to me."

"Of course, I was forgetting. It was about Lady Martin."

"Indeed ?"

"You see, I thought she was one of the

people to whom one ought to make a point of introducing Mrs. Kearton."

" Indeed?"

"And the trouble is that I don't happen to know her very well myself."

"I didn't know that you knew my aunt

at all."

"Your aunt? Is she . . . of course, how silly of me. I ought to have remembered that. And know her, well, perhaps I hardly do know her really, though I've been in the same room a dozen times. So I thought that perhaps you . . .?"

"I see."

"You don't mind my suggesting it, I hope."

"I am grateful to anyone who helps me to make one of my parties a success."

But against even the chilliness of that retort the warmth of Grubbson's excitement

was sufficient covering.

"It's so frightfully important, you see," he blundered on, "that Mrs. Kearton should get to know the really decent people. That was the whole point of the party, after all."

"Was it!"

"Well, I mean . . ."

But already Woolgar Shepphard had turned away. "Tell me," Lady Jane was murmuring languidly, "who is that person?"

"A Mr. Grubbson."

"And who is he?"

"Nobody in particular."

"And what does he do?"

"Nothing in particular." And is he amusing?"

"Not particularly."

" I see."

And with a dispassionately critical eye Lady Jane watched the bustling little figure, effecting introductions as it went, worm its way officiously towards the door. "One would think from the way he's behaving," she went on, "that this party was in a measure his."

"Well, in a way, you see . . ." But the sentence was not destined for conclusion. For almost before he had begun it, Woolgar Shepphard had realised the unwisdom of an explanation. If he were to tell Lady Jane of his compliance with Grubbson's plot, sooner or later it would reach Blanche Kearton, which would almost inevitably lead to the loss of a friendship he had begun to value. It was not the sort of thing that any woman would willingly forgive. It would be as well to forget all about the

incident as soon as possible. The less said about Grubbson, the less seen of Grubbson, would be from every point of view the better.

"Um, Grubbson," he admitted grudgingly, "he's not a bad chap at heart; inclined to be tiresome, though. I am not sure, really, that one should encourage him too much."

For the twelfth time in the course of the morning the bell at Mrs. Kearton's side began to ring. During the last six months, ever since that pleasant party at Woolgar Shepphard's, it had seemed to do little else. "Really, but I shall have to go back to Colorado for a holiday," she thought as she stretched her hand to the receiver.

But it was nevertheless with a happy, welcoming voice that she replied to its inquiry.

"Yes, this is Mrs. Kearton. Who is that? Mr. Grubbson? Oh, how are you, Mr. Grubbson? It seems ages since we met."

"I know," the voice replied. "It's terrible, isn't it? We're both of us so busy, I suppose. But we mustn't start losing touch with one another."

"Why, of course not."

"And I was wondering if I mightn't come round one night this week?"

"That would be bully. Let me see now . . ."

"What about Wednesday?"

"Wednesday? No, Wednesday I shall be going . . . Look here, just hang on while I scatter an eye over my engagements."

It was a most formidable list. Right down the page and for four or five pages that were weeks ahead was a succession of scrawled notes. Embassy, John 1.15. . . . Tea Mabel. . . . Cocktails 5.30 Jack. . . . Claridge's. . . . Supper Mildred. Every second of the day, and for days ahead, her time was catalogued and pigeonholed. She did not know how it had happened, but at every party she had gone to she seemed to have met someone, some jolly person, that you wanted to see more of, whom you rang up next day, and started making plans with, and that meant more black entries in one's diary. Extraordinary how one's friends mounted up. Really, she didn't see how she was to fit in Mr. Grubbson.

"I'm awfully sorry," she began to apologise, "but I'm absolutely full up this week and next, and then the week after I'm going down into the country."

"And I suppose," said the voice wistfully,

"that it's no good trying to fix you up for anything after that?"

"Well, it is rather a long way ahead, isn't

" I see."

And there followed one of those difficult pauses that make telephone conversations, so fruitful a source of quarrels.

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Kearton

tardily.

"It can't be helped."

"One gets so full up."

"I know."

He spoke on rather a bitter note, and it was in not too happy a frame of mind that Blanche Kearton after he had rung off sat staring at her diary. It was not that she was particularly fond of Mr. Grubbson. They had never been in any sense of the word intimate, but she hated to feel disloyal to old friends. She would hate anyone to think that she had dropped him. At the same time she didn't really see how she could fit him in. During the next ten days she was giving only three dinner-parties at her own house, and in each case the parties were complete. Her table wouldn't hold more than twelve. And one couldn't ask a man like Mr. Grubbson to "drop in afterwards." And then after that there was that party of hers at her houseboat on the river.

That party of hers on the river.

Pensively she bit at the end of her long steel pencil-case. The arrangements for that were still to be completed. In a few moments now Woolgar Shepphard and Lady Jane Navlor were coming round to help her with the final list, and now she came to think of it, Mr. Grubbson was a friend of Woolgar. It was Mr. Grubbson, in fact, who had brought Woolgar to her house for the first time. Perhaps it might be possible to squeeze him in. She had meant to ask Janet Okley, but perhaps after all it wasn't absolutely essential. She knew that Janet was also a friend of Woolgar. There had been times even when she had wondered . . . still, there were other occasions, other places. . . . And one must not drop old friends. Resolutely at the foot of her list she pencilled in the name of Grubbson.

A moment or two later her friends were

with her.

"My dear, it's been such a rush," Lady Jane was murmuring breathlessly. "However I managed to get here at all I can't imagine. The days seem to get shorter every week. I think one'll have to give up

sleeping, or sleep only every other day. And now about this delightful party. I'm sure we're going to have the most marvellous time. Who have you asked, my dear?"

"Well, I thought . . ." And one by one Mrs. Kearton read through a list of names, every one of which would have made Mr. Grubbson spend nights of sleepless anticipation, but which existed for Mrs. Kearton as the labels simply of very charming people.

"That'll be heavenly," murmured Lady Jane. "All the people I seem to like best in all the world. I almost feel as though

it were my own party."

"It's been arranged for you, honey."

"Darling, that is too sweet of you. And is that the lot?"

Blanche Kearton hesitated. Now that it had come to the point, she felt a little shy of mentioning Mr. Grubbson.

"There's just room for one more," she said. "Now, is there anyone particular you had in mind?"

"My dear, is there anyone particular you had in mind?"

But still Mrs. Kearton hesitated. "I was just wondering," she murmured, "about Mr. Grubbson."

There was a pause. One of those not exactly awkward pauses when they occur between friends, during which each person is rather hoping that some other will be the first to speak.

"I feel," Mrs. Kearton explained a little lamely, "that I've been rather neglecting

him "

"Yes, of course."

And now Woolgar Shepphard hesitated. He had himself been feeling more than a little guilty about Grubbson. But at the same time it was only by feeling guilty towards Grubbson that he could avoid feeling guilty towards Blanche Kearton. And there are times when one has to accept the lesser of two evils. It would be simply appalling to have Grubbson down there for a whole week, coming up every second minute in his conspirational manner to mutter something about "the success of our plot . . ." No, it would not do.

"Of course I don't want to interfere," he said, "but are you very keen on him?"

"Not frightfully."

"Because, you see," drawled Lady Jane, "though I'm certain in his own set he's a perfectly charming person, among us, I don't know quite why it is, it's our own fault probably, but he seems too self-conscious to be quite happy, and that makes it a little difficult for the rest of us."

"And it's not, you see," said Shepphard, "as though there weren't plenty of other

people."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I had been thinking about asking Janet Okley."

"Ah, Janet Okley, now . . ."

"I was afraid you, or rather some of you, might think that she was perhaps a little

The denials came instantly, eagerly, and

simultaneously.

"Oh no," they cried, "Janet's all right. She's herself. She's a sport. She's real, she meets a chap on his own ground."

But it was reluctantly all the same that Blanche Kearton hesitated with poised pencil above her list.

"I do hate the idea of seeming to drop

a friend."

"But, my dear, you've got so many friends."

"I knew, and I seem to have been neglecting so many of them lately."

She was still hesitating between the names and Woolgar Shepphard could see that the time had come to clinch the matter definitely.

"Why shouldn't you," he said, "when you come back, set aside one evening and give a really big party and ask all the people you've not been seeing much of lately? You could have some star musicians there, and a singer or two, and make a really fine show of it. And if you were to ask Mr. Grubbson to that, don't you think that it would set everything all right?"

"I suppose it would."

She spoke reluctantly, but it was with relief, nevertheless, that the pencil descended to the list. It wasn't as if she had really wanted Mr. Grubbson, and if Woolgar and Lady Jane were so certain the other would be sufficient. . . .

"You're certain he won't feel . . ."

"Dearest," Lady Jane assured her, "it's what he'd really so much prefer himself."

"Well, in that case . . ."

Resolutely and firmly the pencil was drawn through Grubbson's name.

#### WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

WHEN I was twenty-one I said:
"If only I were ten!
Now I am getting old and staid;
How lovely life was then!"

When I was twenty-nine I said:
"Oh, to be twenty-one!
How gay I was, how unafraid,
And life had just begun."

When I was thirty-five I cried:
"Oh, to be twenty-nine!
With youth and wisdom side by side
Life was indeed divine."

What luck that at the present date
I'm only forty-three.
Supposing I were ninety-eight,
How long this rhyme would be!
EVA BARRY PAIN.



"A little later her fever subsided and she sank into a kind of heavy stupor."

# TWO-POUND TOMMY:

## By KATHLYN RHODES

D ILLUSTRATED BY FRANCIS E. HILEY

OMMY RAIKES was not an attractive little boy. In fact one might, passing from the negative to the positive, describe him as a very repulsive little boy. He was undersized for his twelve years, with a shock head of hair which was, as a rule, untroubled by brush or comb; and his features were, to put it kindly, nondescript. His black eyes were bright enough, but too closely set for beauty; and his skin, though brown as a berry, was innocent of a near acquaintance with soap and water.

He lived in a small and tumble-down cottage on the edge of a common, in company with his aged grandmother, a wrinkled and rheumatic old crone, who picked up a precarious living for herself and the boy in various odd ways: plucking poultry for the neighbouring housewives, curing feathers for down quilts, selling the eggs laid by her skinny hens, and indulging in other and less reputable performances which involved the

crossing of her dirty old palm with silver, and the production of a pack of greasy cards.

Her grandson went, under protest, to the village school, whence he played truant as often as he dared. He was not popular with the other children, whose parents asserted, with some truth, that his rags and dirt were a disgrace to the school; but since every child has a right to education it was impossible to dismiss him from the ranks, and he continued to attend—always under protest—though he scowled fiercely at most attempts to instil learning into his shock head and only showed glimmers of intelligence when natural history was to the fore.

In truth, he knew a good deal more country lore than any teacher. He knew where to find a plover's nest—and wasn't above robbing it, either. He could imitate and classify the call of every bird; knew, apparently, the leaf of every tree; and could have passed an examination in the habits of the wild creatures of the woods with flying colours,

Not that the knowledge made him any gentler or nicer to live with. Like many boys he was naturally a callous, cold-blooded, selfish little ruffian; and since none of the boys' organisations, Scouts, Boys' Brigades, or Clubs, appealed to him, his innate sharp-wittedness and keen observation had no chance of being diverted into useful or profitable channels.

Yet Tommy had one sensitive spot in his hard little heart. He loved his grandmother—not because she treated him well, for to tell the truth she was always very ready with her stick, and Tommy got a beating—which he generally thoroughly deserved-most days in the week. Yet for some reason he clung, in his heart, to his granny. Perhaps the wild gipsy blood which was in them both had something to do with it. There were days when Gran was in a good humour, and on those red-letter occasions she would tell him wonderful stories, sing him queer old songs, and talk to him in the strange Romany tongue which had once, in her far-off, handsome youth, been familiar to her. At such times her great black eyes would flash, losing their dullness, her speech would come fast and liquid, and the miserable, draughty hut would be transfigured by the enchantment of the past. . . .

Then, too, Gran's powers of witchcraft appealed to Tommy. She could lay spells on people, make strange magic with wax figures and dragon's blood. She could recite ancient runes which were full of a wild and terrible fascination to the boy; and there was no doubt she knew more about the powers of light and darkness than did the Reverend Harold Jobling, the Vicar of the village

church.

Yes. Taking her all in all, she was a grandmother to be proud of; and even though she had a heavy hand and he never knew what it was to be properly and satisfactorily full inside, Tommy would not have exchanged his own vagabond existence in the hut on the common for that of any of the well-fed and complacent children who lived in the trim little houses bordering the village street.

Then, on one terrible never-to-be-forgotten day, Gran fell ill. It was not merely a twinge of rheumatism such as too often attacked her old bones, but a real, bona-fide illness; and Tommy was scared out of his childish wits. He hung over her ragged pallet with staring eyes, terrified by the scarlet cheeks, the parched cracked lips through which strange and babbling sounds came at intervals. She did not know her grandson, pushed him away when he bent over her; and spoke only one coherent word —"water"—a word which sent him flying to the pump to fill the chipped old mug in which she took her tea or herb beer.

To his joy she drank eagerly; and a little later her fever subsided and she sank into a kind of heavy stupor which to the boy's

inexperience seemed like sleep.

All thoughts of school—never very seriously entertained—fled from Tommy's mind. Prompted by his stomach, he grabbed a chunk of bread and a lump of margarine from a plate in the cupboard and sat on a stool to devour it, his eyes fixed on the old woman's face, his child's soul encompassed

by a growing loneliness and fear.

They were so alone in the world, these two. Visitors never came to the hovel, save the shy and shrinking creatures who crept up at nightfall with their bits of silver held in their clammy hands. The parson had given up the reprobate old woman, who had cursed him to his face for his efforts to reform her; and no one else ever visited the hut. There was literally no one to whom Tommy could turn in this emergency; and for the whole of the day he crouched beside the sick woman, giving her water when she called for it, and replacing the ragged old blanket when it dropped to the floor.

The next day brought a visitor, in the shape of the School Attendance Officer. Tommy's attendance had been very irregular of late, and authority was roused at this flaunting of it, to the extent of visiting the

cottage in person.

Instantly the hut was full of clamour. The inspector was horrified at the condition of things, mentioned bronchitis, and talked bleakly of the Workhouse Infirmary; but Gran, who was now fully conscious, turned on the suggestion with all the vigour she could command.

If she was to die, well, she'd die as she'd lived, in her own home. No workhouse for her, thank you. She knew what went on in them workhouse infirmaries, and she'd no intention of submitting to the minions of the so-called Guardians of the Poor. So long as she paid her rent no one could turn her out of her home; and medicine—bah! she'd back her own herbs and simples against any apothecary's physic; while her boy could give her all the nursing she needed, provided he wasn't dragged away to sit in a stuffy school and learn a lot o' nonsense as would be of no use to him. . . .

Finally a compromise was effected. In return for the concession of allowing Tommy to remain at home for a day or two she agreed to let the village nurse come in morning and night to minister to her; and with that the officer departed; and Tommy, who had hovered in the doorway ready to fly at a moment's notice, came back to his grandmother with a scared face.

"Gran, ye're not really ill? Ye're not goin' to die an' leave me, are ye?"

"Nay, lad." Her voice was weak, her tussle with the officer had exhausted her. "I'm goin' to get better—but mark ye, Tommy, I leave it to ye to see as no one turns me out of 'ere. This is my 'ome, I've lived here nigh on sixty years, and I'll live here till I go out feet first."

"Yes, Gran—I—I'll think on. But—the rent?" The boy faltered out the words, driven on by his vague understanding of the inspector's veiled threats. "If we can't

pay they'll turn us out-"

The old woman's face clouded. She knew well enough the struggle would be a hard one; but they'd get through it somehow. Anyway, the farmer's wife at Low Farm owed her a florin for work done, and she decided to send the boy to collect it—an errand undertaken with some reluctance by Tommy, who had a natural shrinking from decent folk; but rewarded beyond belief by a gift of soup and milk from the kindhearted farmeress, who felt sorry for the boy, having, as she said half-apologetically to her husband later on, boys of her own.

The doctor called once, but was so taken aback by the storm of passion which his visit evoked in the patient that he deemed it best to leave things to the nurse, who conscientiously called twice a day and did her best to bring a little order out of a great chaos.

On the seventh day, however, annoyed by an incautious criticism on the nurse's part, the patient assaulted her visitor, rising from her bed in a spurt of fictitious strength and literally throwing the speaker, who was a small and frail young woman, out of the hovel. The nurse, terrified and angry, fled back to the village, vowing she would go to the hut no more; and for two days the spectres of cold and want, even of death, stalked about the wretched place.

At evening on the second day the old woman roused herself sufficiently to cast a glance at her small grandson, who sat huddled on a stool staring into vacancy, his childish face sharpened by hunger. "Come here, my bairn." He obeyed the whisper, approaching her with dragging feet. "You're clemmed, lad? Well, there's a bit of bread left, and maybe one of the fowls has laid an egg, though they're likely hungry too."

"I'll go see, Gran—but if there's an egg, 'tis for you." Never in all his selfish little life had Tommy realised what sacrifice might mean until this hour. But the hens had failed again; and he was not called

upon for any renunciation.

"Niver mind, Gran—I'll git a bit o' bread—an' if ye can do wi'oot me a bit I'll go oot for a laak wi' t'boys." Even his unsociable soul yearned to be among his kind again. "Dinkie Roberts passed today an' asked me when I wur goin' back to skule."

"Dinkie Roberts?" Her voice was weak, uninterested; but the boy did not

note its apathy.

"Yes. He's a fine chap, is Dinkie—'ead o' the class, an' the only one as ever ses a civil wod to me. Why, 'e knocked down Ben Limmer 'cos 'e called me a gipsy scallywag one day." The boy's voice was eager; even his miserable little soul knew something of the grace of hero-worship. "I—I'd do anythin' for Dinkie . . . not that 'e wants anythin' doin'," he added after a second. "'E's t'sort o' chap as can do everythin' better than anyone else, is Dinkie . . . ."

"Well, run away and get a breath of air." She closed her eyes wearily. "But don't stop too long, Tommy—it gets sort o' lonely

here at night without ve."

Five minutes later Tommy mouched across the Green, hands in ragged pockets, towards the church, which was a fine old structure, considered by experts to be one of the best examples of Early Perpendicular architecture in the North Riding. It was too large for the place—was a relic of former, more prosperous days, and boasted one beautiful stained-glass window, representing the Martyrdom of Saint Stephen, which was the pride of the Vicar's heart.

As Tommy drew near he found a group of lads sitting on the rail of the little bridge spanning the stream which ran outside the churchyard; and as he hesitated, wondering whether or no to pass them, the boy he called Dinkie looked round and hailed him with rough friendliness.

"Hallo, Tommy! How's the old lady?"

"She's middlin' better." Shyness drove him to speak surlily; but the other boy understood and was not offended.

"That's good. Comin' back to skule again?"

''' S'pose Don't want to. so. Hate

skule.'

"That's because ye're allus bottom o' t'class," taunted another boy, one Nicky Hale. "Teacher's goin' to mak' ye a dunce's cap when ye coom back."

"Shut up, Nick." Dinkie, who was the approved leader of the gang, emphasised his words by a dig in the other boy's ribs. "Tommy knows more 'bout birds and

beasteses than any on us."

"Well, what if he do? I 'spect 'e's a beastly poacher or summat-

"I'm not, then." Tommy was roused to fiery retort by the absurd suggestion. He pointed to a graceful bird wheeling against the evening sky above the church tower. "Bet you don't know what that there bird is-up yonder-but I do!"

"Garn!" The other promptly accepted the challenge. course I know-it's a swaller-

any fool knows that!"

'Taint, then! Tis a screamin' devil "-the Yorkshire name for the house-martin. "I knew ye'd say it was a swaller . . . Watch me hit 'en wi' my

He tugged out his catapult—his one cherished possession !—and pulled the elastic; but the bird flew away amid the jeers of the onlookers. In a moment everyone's catapult was out, and a shower of stones flew here and there, harmlessly

enough.

Suddenly, however, there was an ominous crash of breaking glass, followed by a horrified exclamation from Dinkie, whose stone had wrought damage far beyond his expectation or desire, as a gaping hole in the cherished stained-glass window opposite testified only too clearly.

"Ma wod, Dinkie, you'll catch it!" The chorus was half envious, half awed. "Brokken t'winder-St. Stephen an' all-

what'll t'Reverend Jobling say?"

For a moment Dinkie stared bleakly at the splintered hole, and even his boyish countenance grew serious as the full import of his thoughtlessness came home to him.

Then-

"Well, 'tweren't my fault." His voice was a trifle unsteady. "I couldn't 'elp it . . . an' who's to know 'twas me? You

chaps won't gie me away?"
"No fear!" The gay, resourceful Dinkie was the acknowledged hero of the rest, and the speaker voiced the opinion of all. "We won't give thee away, Dinkie . . . I'll swear it, anyway. See-be my finger wet or dry-" He went through the usual boyish ritual, hastily followed by the other



boys. When it came to Tommy, Dinkie quickly, perhaps moved by an unconscious feeling that gipsy Tommy Raikes was beyond the pale.

trunk . . .

"Thou won't give me away, Tommy? 'Twas an accident, and 'twas you started it wi' thy catty."

"Nay-I won't give thee away, Dinkie." Something almost wistful in his tone made the older boy look at him curiously; and he clapped the other on the shoulder in friendly fashion.

"Aye, I'm safe wi' thee, Tommy. Now, lads, we'd best get off afore anyone sees an' gets chatterin' "-a piece of sage advice

which was taken unanimously.

For the next two days Tommy was kept hard at it in attendance on his grandmother. The irritable stage of convalescence had set in, and she had little consideration for the boy. Her capricious appetite demanded daintier food than was available; and the boy was at his wits' end, since now the doctor

and nurse had withdrawn he had no one to whom he might appeal. The money received for outdoor relief had to go to pay the rent; and in this case there was none of the neighbourly kindness generally shown to the sick of the village. Small wonder that at length Tommy's spirit began to fail him.

not give her. Yet even now she would not allow him to beg; and he guessed, shrewdly, that to her haughty, independent spirit stealing would be preferable, provided that the theft was conducted cautiously.

Towards evening on the second day he at length Tommy's spirit began to fail him, went out, driven on by a desire to do something, anything, to alleviate the situation. And as he passed the Post Office on the Green he stopped, idly enough, to read a handbill posted on the whitewashed wall. Tommy was no scholar, but even he could read print; and here, set

"A moment later, sitting astride the tree, Tommy's rough little hands were tearing away great pieces of wood from the fissure in which the dog's paw was imprisoned."

and he meditated a raid on some near-by hen-roost, or even, to such straits was he driven, on some carelessly guarded cottage larder. He and the invalid were alike faint with hunger; and although to Tommy hunger was a familiar evil, he could not bear to see Gran lying there, a shadow of herself, crying feebly for the nourishing food he could

forth for all the world to read, was an offer of Two Pounds Reward to anyone giving information as to the damage done to one of the windows of St. Stephen's Church.

As he stood, painfully spelling out the words, Ben Limmer sidled up to him and whispered in his ear:

"See that, Tommy? They don't know

who did it, and they niver will, for all they offers two pounds to anyone as'll lay information."

"Does that mean as anyone as tells the perlice gets two punds?" His voice was hoarse.

"Aye—but there ain't no one as'll tell 'em. No one 'ud tell tales on Dinkie."

"No . . . in course they wouldn't." He spoke slowly, with a sudden sensation as of an abyss yawning before him; but Ben was no psychologist, and he did not notice the strange look in the other boy's face.

"When you comin' back to skule,

Tommy? How's t'old 'ooman?"

"None the better for your askin'—an' I don't care if I niver comes back!" Now he spoke fiercely, and Ben stared, offended at the way his advances were being received.

"Well, tha's no loss, neither. We don't want no gippos in t'skule," he retorted; but for once this deadly insult passed unavenged, and with a puzzled stare Ben Limmer turned his back and slouched off whistling, hands in pockets as usual.

But Tommy Raikes went home to face a hell before whose nethermost depths his child's soul shrank affrighted, in a mortal

and overwhelming terror.

Here, in his grasp, was the means of bringing help and comfort to Gran. With two pounds he could pay the rent for weeks, could buy food, the milk and meat and eggs for which Gran craved, which would end this nightmare existence, bring life back to its usual normal level.

But—to betray Dinkie—his hero, his friend, Dinkie the brave, the gay, the reckless! To deliver Dinkie up to the terrors of the law, as exemplified by stern Mr. Barton, the Squire magistrate, and by P.C. Sigsworth, the big and burly constable whose very appearance struck apprehension into the hearts of evil-doers. . . .

Oh no, he could not do it. The very thought was impossible, a treachery——

And yet—must he see Gran slowly dying before his eyes, when he held the possibility of wealth in the hollow of his hand? For to Tommy two pounds meant riches indeed. And in his ignorance he told himself desperately that no one need know who had betrayed the culprit. He could go secretly when all the world—his world—was at school; and if he begged them to keep his treachery quiet, surely they would not betray him. . . .

But—to think of Dinkie, the popular, the beloved Dinkie, the one bright figure in all his world, brought low, his curly head bowed in shame . . . oh, it didn't bear thinking of! He would not, must not think of it . . . yet the thought persisted, flooding his soul like some evil miasma rising from a deadly swamp. . . .

At the police station next day he told his tale, sulkily enough, half prepared for incredulity. But they believed him readily—it was an added pang that no one seemed to find it odd that the scallywag Tommy Raikes should betray a comrade; and he had perforce to repeat his story to the parson and, later, the Squire. After which the machinery of the Law was set in motion; and in due course the wretched, reluctant little Judas received the price of his betrayal.

Who first suspected him he never knew. But on his return to school he was greeted with fierce recrimination; and in the playground cries of "Sneak!" were hurled at him from all sides. Some bright spirit dubbed him, appropriately enough, "Two-Pound Tommy"; and the name was taken up eagerly by the jeering, hooting crowd.

Dinkie, so he learned—he wasn't allowed to escape the knowledge-had been "had up" before the Bench; and since he was only a minor his father had been fined in his stead. He would have been birched, so the boys told Tommy savagely, if his dad hadn't promised to larrup him well when he got him home; and to judge from all accounts the promise had been well and truly kept. Dad, it seemed, had taken off his belt and leathered his erring son till he fair bellowed—and the thought of the proud and fearless Dinkie bellowing with pain and shame gave the wretched Tommy a pang of anguish more exquisite than any the culprit had felt beneath his father's "leathering."

To Dinkie, sore in both body and spirit, even his gay hardihood shaken by the, to him, terrifying experience of being hauled before the magistrates, the sight of Tommy Raikes was naturally distasteful; and although he disdained to join in the chorus of recrimination, contenting himself with one cutting sentence, the look of contempt in his blue eyes was as a sword in Two-Pound Tommy's vitals.

For two days Tommy endured life as best he might. With the unthinking cruelty of boyhood his companions continued their jeers and innuendoes. The nickname was on everyone's lips, until at last the teacher interfered; and the more active persecution died down to a less open one of surreptitious pinches and shoves.

But there was one punishment yet in store for the poor little traitor. By some means Gran learned of the affair. She was able to crawl to the door of the hut now, and doubtless some officious passer-by had informed her of her grandson's action. To her he had explained his ability to bring in the food she craved by a story of a small gift from the school-teacher, the one person in the village whom the old woman tolerated. But this second explanation bore the stamp of truth; and one look at the boy's face when she taxed him with it was enough for her quick wits.

"So you told on your friend, ye young Judas!" Her voice was full of concentrated scorn. "Ye might ha' split on most of t'lads and I'd ha' said nought... but to turn on him as was yer friend! Wasn't it 'im as stood up for ye when yon bowdekite miscalled ye? Didn't 'e knock down that young limb o' Satan, Ben Limmer? Ye swore to keep 'is secret, and ye betrayed 'im into the 'ands of the Law to fill yer own greedy stomach!"

"It wur for ye, Gran!" He spoke wildly, yet with something of appeal behind

the words.

"Fur me? Ye think I'd ha' willingly ate the bread of treachery? I've gipsy blood in me veins, and a gipsy niver forgits one as does 'em a kindness—nor an injury," she added darkly. "An' you, as is my own son's son, is a Judas, selling yer friend for a bit o' dirty money! Pah! Get out of me sight, ye young snake . . . if I'd me strength I'd make ye smart for yer filthy treachery!"

Bewildered, almost broken-hearted beneath his grandmother's fierce reproaches, feeling himself the lowest, vilest creature on God's earth, the boy rushed away, fleeing over the common as one pursued by furies, never resting till he reached a lonely spot in the water-meadows beneath the mill where he might be alone with his misery. his soul was weighed down with so terrific a load of guilt and shame that he would not willingly face his kind. To himself he seemed a pariah, an outcast, deserted by friend and foe alike. The memory of Dinkie's words-"I trusted ye, Tommy, I allus stood up for ye—an' ye gave me away!" -of the look in his blue eyes, tormented the boy almost beyond bearing; and he told himself wildly that there was no spot on earth where he could be at peace.

For one despairing moment he thought of

death. It would be easy to drown himself here in the stream . . . he would be fished out all dripping and swollen, as had been the body of a suicide he, in common with half a dozen more scared and thrilled boys, had seen brought up by drags; and then, perhaps, he would get sympathy and not condemnation. . . .

But in spite of his misery the blood of youth ran hotly in his veins. Although at the moment life appeared to hold nothing desirable, the thought of death was terri-

fying.

Besides, how did he know what God would say to a boy who drowned himself? Would he call him traitor, sneak... Tommy's conception of God was a kind of magnified Squire, sterner and more aweinspiring than even that arbitrary dispenser of the Law. Would the hated nickname of Two-Pound Tommy cling to him in the other world? And what punishment was reserved for traitors in that terrifying unknown region?

Earth and heaven alike seemed unfriendly. Nowhere, apparently, would there be any welcome for the soul of the traitor; and through all his misery ran the thought that it was the blue-eyed Dinkie he had betrayed, Dinkie for whom, so he told himself passionately, he would have been cut into little

pieces. . . .

Presently as he sat huddled by the banks of the stream he heard an odd noise, a kind of strangled bark in which there was, surely, a note of canine terror. His natural antipathy to his kind not extending to dogs, he forgot his own misery for a moment and listened, ears pricked, for a repetition of the sound. It came, soon, in the form of an unmistakable howl; and he heaved himself to his feet and gazed about him rather vaguely. Again the unseen dog howled, and now he located the sound as coming from a spot fifty yards down the stream. Curiosity awakened, he ran along the bank, and presently saw a piteous little white object standing on a tree-trunk which for a long time had lain out in the middle of the water, its base firmly wedged into the mud at the bottom of the stream.

Recognising the dog immediately as the property of Dinkie Roberts, the boy whistled and called encouragingly; but the animal, a rough-haired little terrier who had evidently swum out in search of rats, only whined frantically; and looking more closely, Tommy saw that one paw was caught in a fissure of the trunk and held fast as though

in a trap. That it was painful was evident by the dog's moans; and although, recognising Tommy, it tried still more frenziedly to release its paw, it was plainly hurting

itself to no purpose.

"Poor Bim, then—poor old Bim!" Tommy's voice seemed to bring comfort to the little dog, who wagged his tail madly and gave a hopeful bark; but the next moment he howled sharply, and Tommy realised that it was up to him to release the creature.

Well, it wasn't a hard job. The stream, though deep, wasn't wide—it would only mean a swim of twenty yards or so to the tree, and Tommy, in common with the other boys, was a good swimmer in a rough and ready fashion. And callous little brute though he was, in many ways Tommy wasn't the sort of boy to leave a dog in pain if he could help it.

Off with his clothes—he wasn't troubled with false modesty, and in any case there was no one about—and in a moment his little naked brown body was plunging through the water, splashing a good deal, but reaching his objective in a very short time.

Bim, realising that rescue was at hand, scrabbled fiercely with his wet front feet on the trunk; and a moment later, sitting astride the tree, Tommy's rough little hands were tearing away great pieces of wood from the fissure in which the dog's paw was imprisoned. It only took a moment, after all; and as soon as he was free Bim fell ecstatically upon his rescuer and licked his face with a warm, wet tongue whose caress was the first kindness Tommy had known since his own act had cast him into outer darkness.

"Good old Bim . . . I'm glad 'twas me as freed ye, even if Dinkie niver knows!" He rubbed his face against the dog's wet coat. "Mebbe it makes oop for a bit. An' I niver

wanted to hurt old Dinkie. . . ."

The sound of his master's name roused the little dog to a perfect frenzy of rapture; and he jumped about on the tree, plainly inviting his rescuer to swim ashore with him without loss of time.

"Go on, then—get into t'watter!" Assuring himself that the dog's paw, though swollen, wasn't seriously damaged, he gently urged him into the stream; and a second later Bim was splashing his way to the bank, watched by the boy on the tree-trunk. As he scrambled out, dripping, and shook himself, Tommy turned about on the tree and looked at the other bank of the stream, which was some twenty-five yards distant.

"Guess I'll swim across," he thought"T'watter's nice and warm, an' there's a
kingfisher's nest somewhere on t'other side."

He looked down at the water, wondering whether it were deep enough for a dive. Coming to the conclusion that it was, he rose and balanced himself on the trunk preparatory to taking a header; and a second later his brown body described a quite creditable arc through the air, and entered the stream with a clean cleavage of the water.

But alas for poor little Two-Pound Tommy! He did not know of the treacher-ous green weeds which lay on this side of the great tree-trunk . . . did not anticipate the clutch of their sinewy hands, the fatal grip of the strong matted tentacles which twined themselves round his arms and legs and would not let him go. . . .

His agony was, mercifully, short. A choking fight for breath, a rush of water filling his lungs, and swift unconsciousness—such was the manner of the boy's passing.

His rescue of the dog had not gone unmarked, after all. From the windows of the old Mill-House the miller's wife had watched the release and the boy's subsequent dive. When the diver did not come to the surface, she gave the alarm; but although the miller and his son hurried to the spot, they were too late to save the boy.

Even in the last days of his life Two-Pound Tommy had not excited the interest which death bestowed upon him so lavishly. The whole village turned out to his funeral, and as the day was Saturday his school-fellows were able to attend, more than one boyish heart feeling twinges of remorse at the thought of the pitiless jeers and pinches of a few days ago.

Dinkie Roberts, his blue eyes solemn in his awestruck face, was among the mourners. The other boy's death had been a shock to his sunny, generous nature; and although Tommy had caused his recent humiliation he had surely wiped out his treachery by the

rescue of the beloved Bim.

With all his boyish heart Dinkie wished he hadn't been so hard on his betrayer. For he was not too young and careless to realise something of Tommy's desperate misery during those last days of his life; and as he stood in the background with his silent chums and watched the small coffin being lowered into the grave he resolved that he would never judge anyone, even a liar and a sneak—the worst words in his vocabulary—so harshly again.

But what he did not realise was that God had been merciful to the poor little betrayer. To Judas, the Arch-Traitor, came no second chance, no chance to serve the Friend he had betrayed, and his end was swift and evil.

But in the hour of his death Tommy Raikes had been given the opportunity of doing a service—the greatest he could have been called on to perform—for the friend he had wronged. And who could doubt that he would live in Dinkie Roberts' memory, not as the miserable little sneak who had "given him away" to the authorities, but as the quick-witted, plucky boy who had rescued a beloved chum, and, indirectly, by so doing had forfeited his life in redeeming his honour?

#### TERRIERS TWO.

WE call 'e.m Keith and Prowse,
They've the "best seats" in the house
And it's no good saying cushions are taboo!
They will do you every time
With an impudence sublime.
Oh, we put up with a lot

From Terriers Two!

If you take 'em for a walk
And a rabbit they should stalk
You may whistle till your temper's black and blue!
If you think they'll leave the "bun"
Till they're tired of the fun
You expect a bit too much

Of Terriers Two!

If your garden plot is dear
And you think when they draw near
They will delicately tread, for love of you,
Then your hopes are doomed to blight,
For with devilish delight
They'll exhume your choicest bulbs
Will Terriers Two!

If you say to them, "It's flat
I shall have to keep a cat
And sell you to the ragman or the Zoo!"
They will look at you as though
They were saying, "Is that so?
Could you really live without your
Terriers Two?"

When the lonely days are long
And the world has all gone wrong
And you wonder how you're going to see it through,
There they are upon the mat,
And you're glad it ain't a cat,
For they seem to understand

Do Terriers Two!
K. W. SIMPSON.



THE PROFESSIONAL TOUCH.

"I seem to feel a sort of squeaking in my back every time I move, doctor!" "Ah, that is the wheel on your braces. I'll prescribe a little oil!"

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

A FREE GIFT.

By H. J. Slater.

"Wether the watch costs five pund or wether it's worth but a paltry arf-a-crown, you can't lose nutting. For we gives it yer."

I stopped. The proposition seemed a reasonable one. If the watch were *given* to me, obviously I could lose nothing on the deal.

"I place the watch 'ere for the time being." Ah! I restrained my hand just in time from extending itself forward for the free gift, and instead watched the chubby little, earnest man in the centre stoop and deposit the article on the ledge of his attaché case.

I decided to wait. I could follow the whole matter easily. He would be giving away the gold watches presently. "What's he doing it for?" I asked my neighbour, who replied: "He says it's a kind of advertisement for his firm, guvner. Generous firm they must be."

I agreed.

As the chubby little man in the centre righted himself, we found he was holding a chain—

a glittering expensive-looking watch-chain. Things were getting interesting. Once again, I could see it all, of course. I do not mean the chain, but the significance of the matter. Generous, but only to be expected, for what use is a handsome gold watch without a handsome gold chain to notify the world of its presence? If a thing is worth doing . . . Never do a thing by halves . . ., etc.

"This 'ere chain, ladies and gentlemen—and I says it without fear of contradiction—is fit for a dook. One could be proud to be seen with it at even the 'ighest social function—I repeat, the 'ighest, ladies and gentlemen." (His face became purple with the emphasis.) "I don't care 'ow 'igh. Even His Majesty himself could wear it."

My neighbour in the crowd looked at me and I nodded. Yes, it was straightforward and above-board, all right. And reasonable. His Majesty could wear it.

The chain looked very bright, but doubtless the gold in it was new and the yellowness had not had time to tone down. Besides, we could

not lose anything if it were going to be given

"This chain, ladies and gentlemen, is composed of thirty-six 'and-made links. It is-as you can all see for yourself-of gold. File it with a file, rasp it with a rasp, break it into a thousand pieces with a hammer, and it will.

still retain its colour. . . ."
"That is rather a pity," I said aloud. "Now, if the chain would only lose a little of its 

But the roar of the traffic must have drowned my voice, for he continued without noticing me.

"... Gold, ladies and gentlemen. Except that it doesn't bear the Government 'all-mark

"Only an expert could tell the difference," continued the chubby little man in the centre. bending himself towards us confidentially. "File it with a . . ." Here he went through the file-rasp-hammer refrain once more, singing it fairly well, except for a slight huskiness.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I place the chain

"Ah!" my neighbour and I both exclaimed. We were right. The chain—in due course would be given away with the watch.

"This ring, ladies and gentlemen, is a beautyful object, a beautiful object, fit to be worn by the 'ighest ladies, the very 'ighest ladies in the land. It has false stones. I repeat, ladies and



A ROAD HOG.

DISGRUNTLED TAXI-MAN (to Juxie-driver): Want a lot of room for a two-seater, don't you? It's a good thing yer ain't driving a blinkin' char-a-banc!

"A mere oversight, I presume," I shouted. But the traffic was still heavy.

"You can file it with a file, rasp it with a rasp . . ." he went on, the veins in his face and neck nearly bursting in his endeavour to impress on our slow minds the unusual bargain we were getting. The rhythm of the file-rasp refrain was infectious. I could quite understand him reciting it, especially after having taken the trouble to memorise it. "All gold, ladies and gentlemen, in every single link except for the Government 'all-mark."

I looked at my neighbour and we nodded. It was obvious, we agreed, by telepathy, even to the meanest intelligence, that the Government stamp did not make a thing gold. That was pure logic.

gentlemen, false stones. I don't want to mis-

lead you . . ."
Of course! That also was only reasonable. No one could grumble in the least. Given a gold watch and a gold watch-chain free, one could hardly expect the stones in the ring to be

"You mean, I take it," I shouted, "that as the watch is gold and the chain is gold-filerasp-hammer test, slight oversight about the Government stamp-you feel you can be frank with us about the stones in the ring" (he beamed, delighted with my intelligent résumé), "and that you gives the watch away . . ."

"Yes. Wether it's worth a five-pund note or wether it's worth but a paltry 'arf-a-crown, you can't lose nutting, ladies and gentlemen. for we gives it yer. My firm 'ave instructed me to give the watches away as a kind of advertisement. Now in each of these little boxes in my attaché case is a watch, a chain and a ring exactly like those I have shown you—the ring has false stones, ladies and gentlemen, false."

And the price of it—the price of the chain and the ring, for we gives yer the watch—is . . ."

"Can I have the watch only, just the watch," I interrupted. But, yet once again, the noise of the traffic passing the corner must have drowned my voice.



A PATRON OF ART.

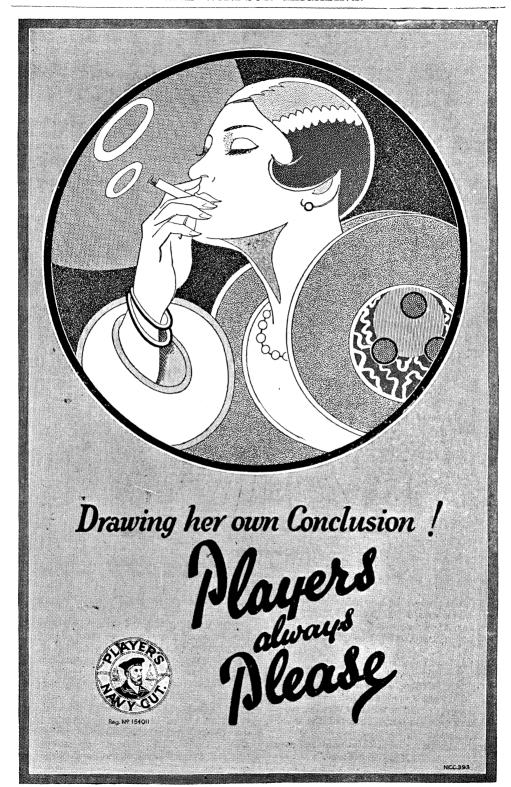
NOUVEAU RICHE: What I want is something nice and bright—suitable for the servants' billiard room!

My neighbour and I nodded. No trying to mislead us there. All serene and above-board. Honesty is the best policy, after all. As he had gone out of his way to let us know the stones were false, we could trust him about the gold.

"Here is the box, ladies and gentlemen. They are all the same—all absolutely identical. JUDGE: Were you ever up before me?
PRISONER: I dunno, your honour. About what
time do you get up?



Lady of the House: Mary! Mary! Hurry and take the parrot into another room. Mr. Barker has lost his collar button.



### THE SPORTING INSTINCT. By Herbert Hamelin.

OF course it was bound to come, sooner or later.

"What's all this fuss about dog-racing?" demanded Lavender, looking up from her paper.

I explained the new sport briefly.

"I suppose those dogs are awfully valuable?" she inquired.

I answered unthinkingly that I had read of as much as £500 being paid for one, and went about

my day's work.

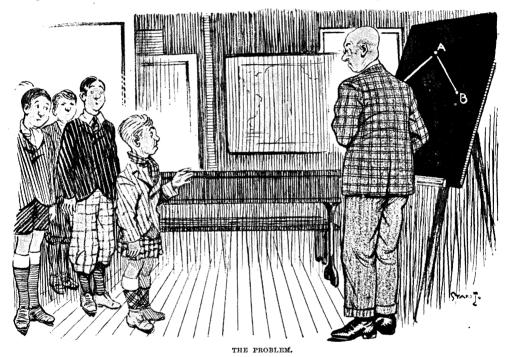
On my return in the evening I found a seedy individual on my doorstep holding a string at the end of which cringed a lanky, anæmiclooking hound.

"Now then, Microbe," I ordered, entering the drawing-room. "Kennel!"

Roaring Forty was stretched in my arm-chair, gobbling iced cakes, with a white satin bow round his neck.

"Oh, the nasty cruel man!" exclaimed Lavender. "Fancy wanting to turn the poor darling out of doors. Sweetums is going to sleep on mother's bed, isn't he?"

We have no synthetic hares among our household Lares and Penates, but a visit to the nursery disclosed a morose Teddy Bear on wheels, and Roaring Forty's training began forthwith. Lavender held him on the lawn while I galloped past, at a good three miles an hour, trailing the quarry. At the sight, Lavender declared it was



Schoolmaster (to class of Scottish boys): From a given point—Boy from Aberdeen: Aye—but wha's goin' tae gie th' point?

"You the gent as the lady said wanted to buy a nice racing dorg?" he inquired huskily.

"No, certainly not——'

"Let you 'ave 'im for a couple o' quid," he urged.

"I tell you I don't——"

Lavender dashed out.

"Oh, the darling sweetums," she gushed. "Did 'ums want to come to mother, then?" and she picked up the little atrocity and hugged it.

"Three quid, mister," observed the bandit,

and it was even so.

Thus I became the owner of a potential racing greyhound named "Roaring Forty."

Glumly I strode to the back pleasaunce and constructed a very creditable kennel from an old packing-case.

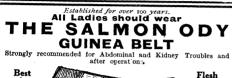
my ferocious expression, Roaring Forty legged it—for his kennel.

After much patting and coaxing, we persuaded him to emerge, and we put the Teddy beside him, hoping he would turn and savage it. He turned—sat down on the animal, and began to scratch himself methodically.

Then Lavender held him while I walked to the gate and whistled and waved my handkerchief encouragingly. Roaring Forty, released from the slips, moved in a leisurely manner in my direction, paused at a bed of choice spring bulbs, and, after involved digging operations, unearthed a mouldering bone, and forgot my existence.

But my racing colours will yet be seen at Battersea. Roaring Forty has speed and the





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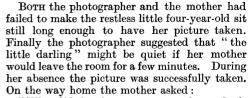
sporting instinct, latent perhaps, but still there. I noticed it yesterday morning. A brown object flashed past my study window, followed by

Lavender crying for help.

I must admit that since my beagling days I have seldom had a more enjoyable run in the country. I was in at the death and was proud. as the Master of the Pack, to present to the only other follower who finished a fragment of a lovely Chinchilla stole.

Lavender seems dreadfully put out now whenever I murmur the word "rabbit."

As if a sporting dog wouldn't know!



"What did the nice man say to make mother's

little darling sit still?"
"He thed, 'You thit thtill, you little newthuns, or I'll knock your block off,' tho I that thtill," she explained.



ACCORDING to Professor Brampton the natives of Iceland are the happiest people he has ever met. We are not surprised considering they send all their depressions over here.



"Too many wives cry for the luxuries they want," declares a County Court Judge. Yes, and too many husbands have to cheque those tears.



An operation failed to discover a thimble swallowed three years ago by an Aberdeen lady. It looks as if she will have to get a new one.



BURGLARY is said to be on the increase. With so many safe robberies reported in the Press one can hardly wonder at it.



Customs officers have recently poured three thousand gallons of pure whisky into the sea, near Aberdeen.

That is the sort of thing which makes Caledonia stern and wild.



VISITOR: Do you have many wrecks on this

BOATMAN: Only them what you see in the bath-chairs.



A GAS-INSPECTOR is publishing a volume of poems. It ought to be easy to read his metre.



DRAWING THE LINE.

"No, dear. I'm not having anything more to do with Mr. Higgings. Y'know-he splits 'is affinities.'

"You seem to have plenty of intelligence for a man in your position," sneered a lawyer, who was examining a witness.

"If I wasn't on oath I'd return the compliment," replied his victim.



An M.P. declares that no one seems to realise nowadays that great things spring from very small beginnings. Except, of course, our seedpacket artists.





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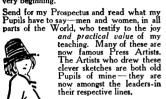
By Percy V. Bradshaw

(Founder and Principal of the Press Art School).

This is one New Year resolution that you won't want to break! Once you start Sketching, I can promise

you that your leisure hours during 1928 will seem happier and more worth while than they have seemed hitherto.

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Should you not live to the age of 55, £2,000, plus accumulated profits, will be paid to your family. If death result from an accident, the sum would be increased to £4,000, plus the profits.

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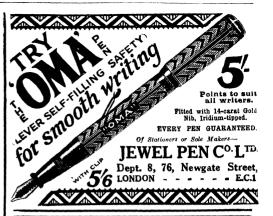
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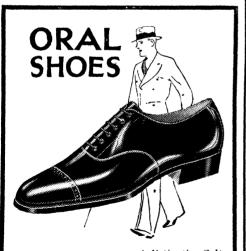
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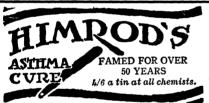
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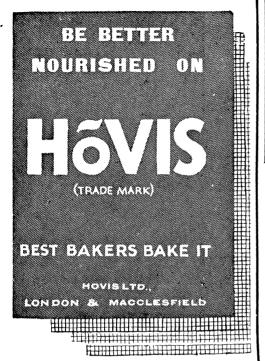
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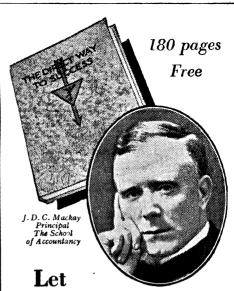
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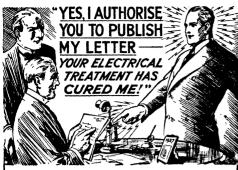
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"Dear Sir,—... Your wonderful Body Battery has "Dear Sir.—... Your wonderful Body Battery has made a wonderful difference to me. My nerves are quite steady now, work is a pleasure, and that tired feeling has left me. I have never felt better than I do now, for many a year."

Yours truly, (Signed) WALTER FLETCHER.

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WALTER FLETCHER.

The above are merely extracts, but copies of the letters in full can be obtained on request from the British Electric Institute (Dept. 19), 25, Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.I.

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It is a point of fact (and facts-the hardest possible—are the only things the present generation can be expected to take seriously) that Alcohol and its disabilities are no longer exclusively the province of men. In the days when "drink," to use that vulgar but convenient term, meant heavy wines, brandy, whisky, and the coarser spirits, there was very little temptation for women to indulge in it. But things are very different now. Europe has become "cocktailised," and there is, unfortunately, no form of Alcohol more dangerous and at the same time more adapted to the feminine palate.

A cocktail is a strong pick-me-up; it has approximately the effect of a glass of champagne; and it is a drink which can be taken at almost any hour. anything more tempting, more seductive, and, though she probably does not realise it, more intensely demoralising to the woman of to-day, with her arduous and multifarious duties, be imagined!

## THE COCKTAIL HABIT IS THE EASIEST IN THE WORLD TO SLIP INTO.

You are tired after a long day, a couple of cocktails help you to shine at dinner; they also make a dull lunch bearable; they also . . . but why enumerate? Taken at regular intervals (like medicine, and that is the way they are consumed by a multitude and that is the way they are constined by a multitude of men and women) they perform their extraordinary task of "getting you through the day." In time you come to rely upon them . . but of course, you tell yourself, it is only during the season, or while you are so busy; you can always give them up. You try to do so—and you cannot. You try again. You are miserable, low, depressed, as you yourself admit, "not fit to speak to," and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred yet again give in the intervention of the second of out of a hundred you again give in. It is inevitable, for the alcoholic habit is scarcely ever broken unaided. Circumstances are too much against it. But if, when you first realised your addiction to this—or any other you first realised your addiction to this—of any other —form of stimulant, you consulted the Turvey Treatment Association, all your worry, depression the worst of all human ills, and general unhappiness would be cured-and cured quickly. Instead of would be cured—and cured quickly. Instead of struggling vainly and unsuccessfully, you would be able to regard your temporary bondage as an evil dream from which you had awoken. The Turvey Treatment necessitates neither nursing homes, doctors, nor injections—nothing which could conceivably interfere with the carrier which the carrier with the carrier was ceivably interfere with the ordinary course of your

#### THE TURVEY TREATMENT,

which can be sent to any part of the country or abroad, not only suppresses the craving for stimulants and drugs, but actually creates an antipathy to them, and, whilst perfectly harmless to either sex, acts as a revivifying tonic, building up the wasted tissues and invigorating the whole nervous system—thus obviating that fearful sinking feeling of collapse which inevitably overcomes the patient's resolution to abstain from alcoholic liquors.

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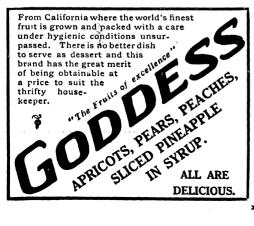
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Solutions must be accompanied by three outside printed wrappers from tablets of Wright's Coal Tar Soap and the envelope marked "Crosswords," Wright's Coal Tar Soap, 44/50 Southwark Street, London, S.E.1, to reach this address not later than March 31st.

It is suggested to Colonial readers to forward their replies as quickly as possible.
In all cases the decision of the Proprietors of Wright's Coal Tar Soap

must be accepted as final and no correspondence can be entertained.
Results will be announced in the "Daily Mail" April 9th and
"The Sunday Chronicle" April 8th.

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#### Clues: ACROSS

- Medical adviser.
- Wright's Coal Tar Soap makes complexion like this.
- Gnawing animal.
- 13. Cry.
  14. Manifested.
  16. Tempt.
- 18. Evergreen trees.
- 19. Brisk
- 21. Bread and milk.
- 22. Ill.
- 23. Indoor game. 24. Wright's is right.
- 25. Shelter.
- 26. Blessings.
- 27. Large spoon. 28. Scrubs clean.
- 30. Broad.

- 31. Uncommon.
  32. Wise men of the East.
  34. Removed by Wright's Coal Tar
  Shampoo Powder.
- 35. Produced by Wright's Coal Tar Shampoo Powder.
- 38. Lift.
- 40. Article of faith.
- 43. Part of church.
- 44. Large washing basin.
  45. Smallest buys a Wright's Coal Tar Shampoo Powder.
- 46. Insane.
- 47. Dried ready for wear.
- 48. Boxed.
- 40. Boxed. 49. Not seen on bobbed heads. 51. Given to hair by Wright's Coal
- Tar Shampoo. 52. Image.
- 53. Card game. 54. Well-kept hair is this to a
- woman.
- 55. Writers.

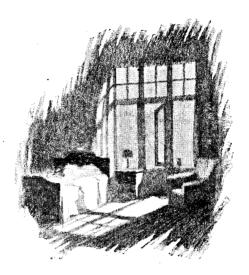
#### DOWN

- 1. Drives away.
- 2. Intimate companions.
- Used after washing with Wright's Coal Tar Soap
- Songs of praise.
- Colour. Parts of a flower.
- Debtors.
   Portable dwelling.
- 9. Allow.
- 11. Trod. 15. Bees' home.
- 17. The best soap.
  19. Beach.
- 20. Animal. 23. Woo.
- 24. Girl's name. 26. Brag.

- 27. Kindle.
- 29. Small bottle.
- 30. Necessary with Wright's

  ' Coal Tar Soap.
- 32. Provided with abundant neck hair.
- 33. Hair toilet.
- 34. Scorn. 35. Young hare. 36. Cock-a-doodle-doo.
- 37. Repairers.
- 39. Gem.
- 40. See 17 down.

- 42. Landing stage. 44. Kind of thread.
- 45. Hindoo rank.
- Tiny particle.
- 47. Tiny particle. 48. Natural hair ornament.
- 50. Girl's name.
- 51. Resinous substance.



## You can sleep

JSN'T it fine to slip into your comfortable warm bed, snuggle down between the cosy bedclothes, and be lulled away into the land of perfect dreams! But perhaps you don't enjoy such happiness? That's because you're not fit—you're too tired to sleep.

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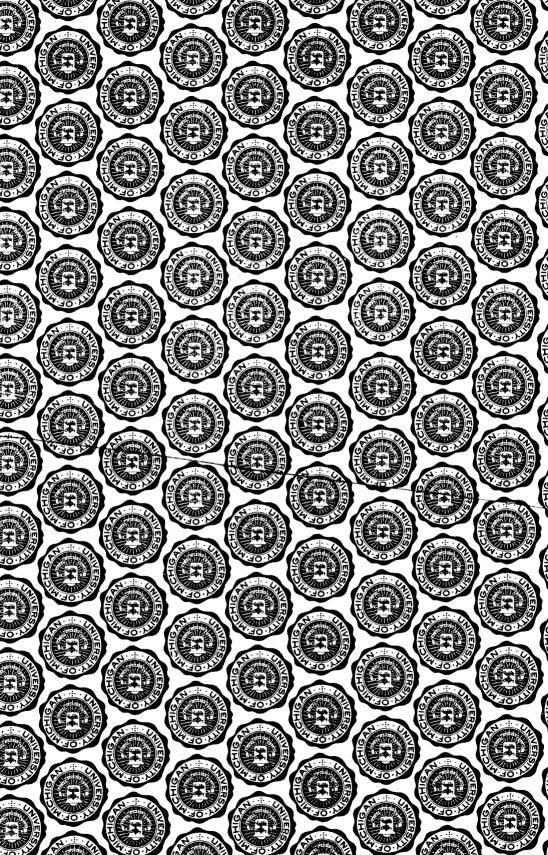


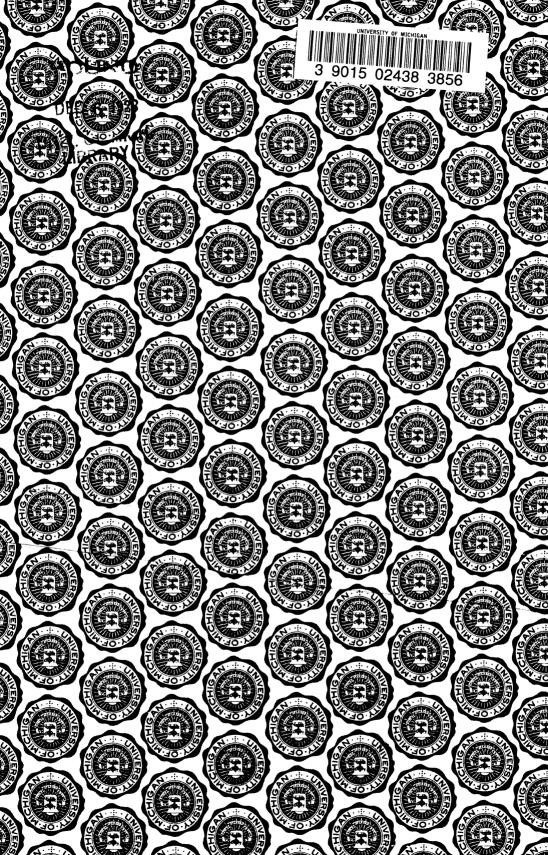
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